Bestselling Author

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EXORCIST

VOLUME THREE

SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND DISCERNMENT

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OFFICE OF EXORCISM

EXORCIST

(Volume Three)

SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND DISCERNMENT

FR. JOSE FRANCISCO C. SYQUIA

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I dedicate this humble work to Mama Mary;
I place it and all who would read it under her mantle of love and protection

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INTRODUCTION

"The LORD said to the *satan, 'Where have you been?' Then the satan answered the LORD* and said, 'Roaming the earth and patrolling it.' "

—Job 2:2

When I was initiated into this ministry of liberation more than a decade ago, I thought a possession case was something an exorcist would experience maybe at the most once a year. But the reality is that I have never expected to see the great number of cases that the office is ministering to at present. This spiritual and corporal act of mercy has been relegated to the sidelines. The poorest of the poor are those who have become prisoners of the devil and his demons.

Do I see the devil everywhere as some may think? Of course, I don't, but I didn't expect to find him so tangibly active and spread out in the lives of so many Catholics. I am not speaking here of temptation but the extraordinary demonic attack of obsession, oppression, possession, and infestation. It is very hard to detect the devil acting thus in the lives of Catholics since he is the master deceiver, therefore some priests tend not to be able to detect his presence nor know how to draw him out due to his deception. A doctor who specializes in cancer and has dealt with this sickness for many years does not see cancer everywhere. He sees cancer because he knows how to detect it; he also knows it is on the rise because more and more cases are brought to him, because it is his expertise, and because of his many experiences with the disease. A general practitioner would not have the same perspective as the specialist.

Likewise, as an exorcist of Manila for around 12 years now, I do not seek the demons out or look purposely for them. I very rarely, if at all, speak about them in my personal or public life as a priest unless I give talks or respond to a request for help in this area. I have witnessed their active presence in the many cases who come to us seeking the power of the risen Christ over them.

Now, some people may have heard a few ghost stories from their friends or may, one way or another, have encountered some paranormal phenomena themselves. Being the point exorcist for the Archdiocese of Manila for many years now, I have heard countless accounts from people who come to us and have encountered the demonic presence very many times, so much so that in the beginning, I felt myself going into depression. These people recounted very

similar stories, with the same patterns and dynamics regarding their problems. Yet these people have never even met. However, I witnessed these same persons responding to prayers and being liberated by the exorcisms done in the Name of the Lord. When I hear about priests refusing to at least diagnose whether the parishioner brought to them for help may in fact be possessed or oppressed, and just immediately dismiss the person as simply lacking in sleep or has not eaten breakfast, I get dismayed. With the thousands of demoniacs brought to the Lord during his time, he never has once said that the person merely needed sleep or food. He exorcized them all! A parish priest must, at the very least, learn to diagnose so he can at least make the correct response. Charity demands this.

On the other hand, one cannot really blame these priests because demonology was never a subject in the seminary after Vatican II. If I were not in the ministry, I might also have the same mindset, especially with my training in psychology. But today, I cannot remain silent about demonology since in our office around 90% of those who seek help have some form of demonic presence and that with the proper spiritual interventions, they are liberated and led back to grow closer to the Lord. All of these cases would not have become cases if the faithful had been forewarned about the deceptive strategies and tactics of the evil one. Of course, a number of the cases we encounter also have a psychological component since traumas and deep woundedness make a person psychically and morally vulnerable to the demonic. Demons look for any vulnerability in a person and aggravate them; hence we also have psychological specialists who assist and support us.

Diagnosing whether a case has a spiritual dimension includes interviewing the person and family members aside from knowing the proper spiritual tests to do. A priest once told me that he tried using ordinary water (not blessed) on a supposed demoniac and the person reacted violently and so he straightaway knew that the case was psychological. This type of testing is not recommended because the devil is shrewd. He knows when water is not blessed but he reacts in the body of the possessed nevertheless so that the priest is fooled and prayers of liberation are not said to cast him out. Another priest mentioned that he commanded the demon in the supposed demoniac to manifest himself in a certain manner using only a command in his mind and since no demon manifested, he concluded immediately that the person was not possessed; this also is not recommended since even in a solemn exorcism, it sometimes takes a long period of time before a demon manifests itself. Interviewing the person plus a cluster of different spiritual tests given at appropriate times should be done by the parish priest to make a proper diagnosis. Praying to the Holy Spirit for discernment is essential.

God desires to love his people through his Church. If we priests turn people away without proper charity and discernment, they end up in the occult. We lose the opportunity to help that person experience God's love through us. What's more, that person ends up indebted to the enemy, instead of growing in a love

relationship with God.

My more than ten years in the ministry made me see, discounting temptations, how varied, widespread, intense, and tangible the devil can attack Catholics, something which I never thought possible before. I saw clearly his actions where I never thought or suspected to find them; ask any exorcist with a few years on his belt and he will say the same thing. So when we in the ministry teach that keeping a good luck figurine in the house is wrong or that wearing an amulet is sinful, we speak not only because this is a teaching of the Church but because we have personally seen how true it is that these things can bring very tangible evil disturbances into the life of a Catholic. When we teach that going to occult practitioners is evil, we do it not only because the Church teaches that this is a sin against the first commandment but also because we have seen how it can easily lead to obsession, oppression, and even possession, and how difficult it is to break the demonic stronghold and bondage due to the benefits received by the victim.

I remember a priest from the north who was very excited when he told me of his experience. He recalled that he had three friends, some of them relatives who had been in the hospital for some time and he had been praying prayers for healing over them but they did not get any better. When he tried praying prayers of deliverance over them, all three immediately became well and went home. In the Gospel, it is clear that the demons can also cause physical problems as is seen in Luke 13:11–16 where a woman had a spirit of infirmity for 18 years; she was bowed down and could not look upward at all and in Matthew 12:22, we see a person possessed with a demon that brought about dumbness and blindness. Jesus healed them through exorcism.

I also remember one of my last cases: exorcism of a convent. The nuns reported later that after the deliverance of the place, their chronic illnesses were healed, where they could not even kneel anymore (I would assume these were the older ones with knee pains), they were able to do so afterwards. I did not do prayers for healing but only prayers of deliverance or prayers of liberation and minor exorcisms. The nuns clearly saw how the devil can cause physical difficulties and not just attack us with temptations. These are just one or two examples of our many cases where I witnessed how the devil can remain hidden while harassing in a very tangible manner those who desire to seriously follow the Lord. Let us therefore never assume that the devil and his minions are there but cannot have any real influence over us and so we think it is better to just ignore them.

Now, what is worse is that many times a person may not even be aware of what is usually causing his problems when he is beset with continuing difficulties in his life. What scares me really is that many people take their spiritual lives for granted and are therefore so spiritually and psychically vulnerable. If we, exorcists, including our volunteers, get harassed and retaliated, what more a Catholic who desires to follow faithfully our Lord but

does not know the spiritual armor and weapons God has given us to protect ourselves. As Catholics, we must always remember that we are at war! If one is not aware of any spiritual battle going on, then the enemy is maybe winning his battle in this person's life. If there were no war, then why would St. Paul oblige us to wear our spiritual armor? Why would he speak about the war and struggle that is an essential part in the life of a Catholic and the necessity of bearing spiritual or divine weapons?

"Let us then throw off the works of darkness [and] put on the armor of light" (Romans 13:12).

"Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

"For, although we are in the flesh, we do not battle according to the flesh, for the weapons of our battle are not of flesh but are enormously powerful, capable of destroying fortresses" (2 Corinthians 10:3–4).

Persons who are blind to the reality of an adversary (an aggressive enemy bent on spiritual murder) to the spiritual life may wonder why after doing many good things for almost a lifetime, they have not yet reached the level of holiness that God desires of them. They also keep falling back to their vices and sins. We liken the above scenario to a sports car which a buyer is testing. He desires to experience the full potential of the car, but as he steps on the gas pedal, he is not aware that his other foot is stepping on the brakes. Unless the person is made aware of the other foot on the brakes and he removes it, he will never be able to experience the full speed potential of the car.

Jesus gave glory to the Father by combating and defeating the devil and destroying his works. But God allows the devil and his minions to remain and roam in this world and did not relegate them all to hell, shutting them up forever. The will of the Father for us, then, is clear. We, too, are called to enter the battle with Jesus so that together with him, we may glorify the Father by continually defeating the evil one and his influence in our lives and in the lives of others. Every victory over demons also gains for us merit in the eyes of God.

It is important to remember that the devil and his legions have already been defeated by the cross of the Lord; but the spiritual weapons and armor given to us that arise from this victory still have to be used in our daily life. The power of Christ's victory over the demons has not been used to its full potential by us Catholics, hence we see how the spirits of evil continue to abound all around us, causing untold miseries and sinfulness.

Many do not believe in the existence of the devil or in his power to latch on to any weakness he sees and to aggravate its intensity. The whole world is falling apart with unheard-of catastrophes, cold-blooded persecutions and violence, and societal dysfunctions and sins that are inhuman and which exist almost everywhere. Still, they are blind to the reality of the devil. It is likened to a

person who does not believe that he has cancer even while his whole body is decaying before his very eyes.

"You want proof of the devil's existence? Show me a man who denies his existence, there's your proof" (Bl. John Henry Cardinal Newman).

"Satan has very little trouble with those who do not believe in him (those who deny that he exists); they are already on his side" (Ven. Fulton J. Sheen).

As Catholics, we do not believe in fate, bad luck, good luck, karma, chance, coincidence nor destiny since all that occurs is under divine providence. As God said to St. Catherine of Siena, "No leaf of a tree falls to the ground without my providence." So when we look at the moral and spiritual chaos and destruction occurring in the world which many times go beyond the capacity of human nature, men of faith can easily discern an active agent acting behind the scenes. With so much evil, persons of faith can never say that evil is simply the lack of what is good; they see a living entity behind it all.

An author once said about the devil's ability to remain hidden in today's world: "Without the light of faith, one is not able to see into the profound darkness in which he is hidden. Therefore, we must not be astonished if the world does not know him, or denies his existence, or has a false conception of him." "Whoever is in darkness does not see Satan and does not even suspect he exists; but men of faith can know him, fight him, and beat him."

Last January 18, 2015, here in the Philippines, there occurred the largest gathering of Catholic faithful ever for a pope. Pope Francis, in very clear terms, said, "Sometimes, when we see the troubles, difficulties, and wrongs all around us, we are tempted to give up. It seems that the promises of the Gospel do not apply; they are unreal. But the Bible tells us that the great threat to God's plan for us is, and always has been, the lie. The devil is the father of lies."

It is my hope that this third and final volume in the trilogy becomes an instrument to open the eyes of all Catholics, especially its leaders, in order to become aware that we are at war and that learning about this war and how to fight it better cannot and should not anymore be ignored or postponed.

"See how many Christians are in the hands of the devil; if my elect do not free them by prayer, these unfortunates will be eternally lost" (Jesus to St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi).

In our office, the Archdiocese of Manila Office of Exorcism or AMOE, in addition to our many and difficult cases, we have a lack of manpower, energy, and time since the few Manila exorcists have other duties and the religious and lay volunteers have their own vocations to attend to. We have at the moment only one full-time member. The pressing need therefore to minister to the growing number of cases is another reason why I have written this book.

Hopefully, this work, with the grace of God, may attain the following objectives:

First, that the growing number of official exorcists of the different archdioceses and dioceses as well as their lay volunteers may have a more practical knowledge about the ministry in order to aid them. Secondly, to help parish priests diagnose parishioners who come to them for help as well as to aid them in resolving less severe cases of extraordinary demonic activity on their own. Hopefully, this work would also assist them in directing the person needing help to the proper medical, psychological, or spiritual referrals when necessary.

This book, the last in the series entitled *Exorcist*, will focus on topics that are more practical and therefore more technical than the previous works in the series. As I mentioned in the first book, this work would focus on certain practical points regarding the ministry of liberation and the discernment of spirits. Regarding the ministry of liberation, the focus will be on the study of how the devil attacks extraordinarily, what causes them, and how to respond to these attacks. Case studies will be used to concretize the learnings. There is a chapter that focuses on folk religiosity; the specific perspective will center on the moral repercussions of syncretism or the contamination of our faith by paganism/animism. The last major topic will be on the discernment of spirits as applied to private revelations since many cults are arising due to false mystics and visionaries mesmerizing people with their so-called "signs and wonders."

A growing challenge in the Philippine Church today is to prepare ourselves to detect, confront, draw out, and defeat the devil when he attacks and subjugates Christians in an extraordinary manner. May this volume assist in equipping Catholics to fight back for the sake of their own souls, the salvation of their brothers and sisters, and for the greater glory of God; may it be a source of guidance to Catholics who are called to join the Lord in completely destroying the works of the devil in their lives and in society.

I place this work again under the mantle of Mama Mary that whoever would read this work may be protected from the fiery darts of the enemy, that he be inspired and consoled by grace, that he learn how to enter the spiritual war as a true knight of the Lord, and most of all that he grows in truly loving and serving God. Through Mama Mary, may all glory be given to our loving Father, Jesus, our faithful Brother, and the Holy Spirit, our consoling Friend.

STORY

The Life of St. Mary of Jesus Crucified

This account in the life of St. Mary of Jesus Crucified, "The Little Arab," who was beatified by St. John Paul II and canonized by Pope Francis last May 17, 2015, is a very unique and singular narrative. She is one of the very few saints whom God allowed to be possessed by the devil in order to grow in merit, save souls, and glorify God by triumphing over the devil. In the Book of Job, we see a parallel in the designs of God. According to Fr. Jesús Ma. Merino Antolinez, OP in his pamphlet entitled, The World Religions and Satanism, the Book of Job manifests two lessons for us: "in the first of which the divine mercy and wisdom are shown at work, and in the second, 'The Enemy' and his activities become uncovered." These two lessons are seen in detail when one reads the possession account of this Carmelite saint. The narrative brings to the fore the spiritual principles which state that where evil is, God's grace will necessarily always be available in more than equal measure and that God would never permit us to be tempted beyond our capacity (of course, prayer is a necessity in this regard).

It is known that oppression and obsession as well as infestation were common in the lives of the saints but possession is very rare. When we speak about extraordinary demonic attacks in the lives of the saints, we must keep in mind that these occur not because they had any spiritual and moral openings which we find in the normal cases of extraordinary demonic activity; God permitted these attacks to further the merit of the saints. Also, through them, more souls were saved and greater glory was given to God which, of course, also increased the saint's future glory in heaven. God can always bring out good from evil for those who love him. He can bring out maximum good where maximum evil exists and his instruments to bring this about are his saints.

May the story of St. Mary of Jesus Crucified serve as an inspiration and consolation to those especially undergoing diabolical afflictions and may this saint serve as their patron and intercessor. The main body of the story is adapted from the saint's biography, Life of Blessed Mary of Jesus Crucified, written by her spiritual director, Fr. P[ē]re Estrate. I thank Sr. Mary Bernard Tescam, OCD for her help, especially in translating chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 of her biography

from the French.

St. Mary of Jesus Crucified was a Discalced Carmelite nun in the Carmelite Monastery of Bethlehem, Palestine. She was born in the Holy Land on January 5, 1846. She had been orphaned when she was but two years old and had a difficult childhood moving from Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, and France. She entered the monastery in 1867. She was then sent as co-foundress to Mangalore, India where she founded a Carmel in 1870 and where she made her perpetual profession on November 21, 1871. She was afterwards sent to Bethlehem Carmel (1875) where she died on August 26, 1878. Her life was characterized by the virtues of humility and simplicity, and she was given by the Lord the special gift of sharing in his passion (stigmata). She also had a very deep love for the Church and the Pope. Today, as we see the rise of extraordinary demonic activity, may this saint witness to us how to defeat the devil in the battlefield of faith.

During the period of Lent of 1868, the future saint was still a novice in Carmel. During this period of her life, before the start of her diabolical possession which would last for 40 days, she was already a victim soul of the Lord. She suffered excruciating pains for the sake of others. As her sufferings increased more and more, she was later transferred to the infirmary. The pains of the night were even more terrible. But despite all this, the sisters who passed by the bed of the novice would smell a very sweet perfume emanating from her body. Her veil and her mantle were filled with this same heavenly perfume.

During the first Friday of Lent, towards six in the morning, blood started to flow from the saint's hands and feet. A crown of thorns was perfectly traced around her head and was also oozing with blood. Around noon, the blood stopped flowing but the wounds remained opened. They became deeper each week until Easter. The open wounds filled Sr. Mary with confusion and embarrassment. She pleaded to the Lord to take them away but to no avail.

There were times that she would fall into ecstasy. Once during a particular long ecstasy, she spoke of the nothingness of this life, the blindness of sinners, the perdition of souls and the evils assailing the Church. On the eve of Palm Sunday, she said in ecstasy, "All things pass. My God, cover with your mercy the poor sinners. If they understand your word, if they recognize your presence in the tabernacle, if they knew that everything is passing, they shall be converted. Poor sinners!" After some moments, she added, addressing the Church, "My Mother Church—mystical rose, I love you. Holy Spirit, descend upon your Church, over the priests; illumine the children of the Church."

In one instance, the novice shared to the other sisters what Jesus had showed her: "He showed me five paths. In the first, I saw souls sleeping with a very deep sleep and very heavy languor. The serpents encircled these souls. Jesus cried out to them: 'Wake up or else the beasts will devour you.' In the second path, I saw souls as if thrown and plunged into an abyss; to be able to get out of this abyss, Jesus presented them with a unique stairway. This is the ladder of suffering. But

these souls did not have the courage to go up this ladder. In the third path, I saw souls falling into manholes; a little wind and even smoke sufficed for them to be thrown in; it was the wind or the smoke of vainglory. In the fourth path, I saw a snow-mountain and souls immersed in this snow. They lost the virtue of charity. In the fifth path, I saw souls much occupied with flowers, of pleasures. Behind them I saw fire following them, waiting for them." May this vision be a constant reminder to us of the different temptations that can assail our spiritual life.

On Holy Thursday, at two in the afternoon, blood started to flow from her wounds. An exquisite perfume emanated from the blood and the linen which were used to wipe them; the perfume clung to the linen. The next day, at the anniversary of the death of Jesus, the sisters saw in her person, a representation of the sacrifice of the cross; blood flowed down from her stigmatas. Once they were washed, the sisters saw that the wounds on the feet and hands were transparent. Light could be seen to pass through the wounds.

Now, Satan demanded from God the permission to test this novice like another Job. He obtained it and asked to possess her body for 40 days. This possession was announced by Sister Mary a long time in advance. The novice stated that "Jesus gave to Satan the power to torment my body for 40 days: I will suffer very much. The devil will have power over my body; my heart and soul will be hidden." She further added, "Satan would like to be my master; he asked permission to try me. Jesus and Mary will keep me and thus, in trying to make me stumble, the devil will make me grow before God. Yes, yes, Satan, I shall become bigger in the eyes of God, thanks to your malice. My Mother crushed your head; I shall crush you also by Mary, by Jesus."

"Sunday (the possession was to start then)," the novice said, "I shall be in the sea of trial. O my God, I offer all for the Church, for the Holy Father, for the Community, all for the Order, for priests, for their parents and relatives; for the poor souls in purgatory. When I shall be in the waters I shall not be able to say anything, nor do anything. O my God, I offer today all for love of you in union with Jesus." In two hours the extraordinary possession would begin. She said in ecstasy, "I would have to fight nine kings and nine nations before they come at the summit of the mountain where Jesus is to be found." These words indicated the possession of the novice by nine successive legions of demons.

The possession of the saint began on July 26, 1868 and lasted until September 3, 1868.

Exactly when the hour of noon struck on July 26, the face of Sr. Mary of Jesus Crucified became gloomy and a slight trembling and shuddering of her body began. The devil had come to possess this novice of Carmel. With shocking suddenness, the devil cried out through the mouth of the possessed on hearing the Angelus being prayed, "What are you murmuring at?" Focusing on the sisters around, he taunted, "Oh, how black you all are!" The devil then threw down her rosary, saying, "What are all these foolishness and stupidities?" He

added, “Fools, imbeciles!” He then addressed a sister who had kissed her crucifix, “You are embracing a piece of wood!” The sister replied, “It is Jesus! It is the good God.” “There is no God,” hurled Satan.

The possessed then struck her own body with forcefulness; she also asked for a knife in order to take out all the “bad marks” (the wounds of the stigmata). At a certain point, she turned towards a religious who had failed in a matter of minor importance. “You,” she said to her, “you are not as black as the others because you have missed a community act. That is good for me. Do not follow the community; ask to be always special!” We see here the devil acting out his nature as an accuser.

The possessed novice then rose for a while and went towards the enclosure door. “Let us go! Let us go!” she shouted. “Follow me, all of you, go out into the world! Get out of here, out of this bad house; come and enjoy the pleasures of the world!” On seeing the Prioress, she shouted, “Who is this old hag of a woman? I do not know her!” When the great silence bell rang, the devil talked more than ever and prodded the others to imitate her. She tried to send away the sister charged to watch over her while she forced the others who had duties to stay with her. Above all, she told the sisters not to obey whatever the “old woman” commanded. We see here in this account, the great repugnance and hatred of the devil with regard to the virtue of obedience: obedience to the rule of life of the community and the superior. From these accounts and the ones following, one would perceive clearly what virtues are most abhorrent to the devil and therefore most pleasing to God.

The novice was not left alone for a single instance lest the demons harm her. They tried to do so, during the retreat preached by Abbot Manaudas, the Superior of the Major Seminary of Bayonne. The word of God irritated the devil very much. Often he interrupted the preacher. “No, no,” he would shout, “All that is not true. He is lying, this old man. I will crush him!” And he accompanied these words with threatening and menacing gestures. The priest was not at all afraid of these antics of the devil. At the end of the instructions, he made the possessed approach him in the name of obedience in front of the grille. He commanded the devil to come out of the body of the novice and he was obliged to obey after a strong resistance. The novice, freed for a moment, said tearfully, “My Father, where was I?” The good Father Manaudas addressed her with consoling words and encouraged her. “My Father,” she said, “I always want to suffer; I do not want to offend God. If I can love him a little, I shall be happy.”

A little later, the devil again entered her body. She rose then with strange feverish movements of strength, holding her head high to the priest. She stamped her foot on the ground and when the priest called her name, Sr. Mary of Jesus Crucified, the devil shouted back, “She is not here! She will not come!” When the devil was forced to get out in the name of Jesus, he would only enter again almost immediately afterwards.

Satan wanted to trouble the sleep of the community. One night, he tried to cry out frightening cries. His intention was to make the sisters break the Grand silence. But he did not succeed. The priest ordered him to stop and from that time on Satan was not anymore able to harass the sisters during the night.

This spirit of anger wanted, above all, the life of the possessed. She escaped one day from the watchful eye of the sisters and threw herself several times from a high place into a reservoir of water. She did not die although she sustained serious wounds. She did not do anything evil due to the special protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This fact was acknowledged by Satan himself.

Once during recreation, the poor victim was led to the garden. The devil dreaded above all the hermitage of Mount Carmel where Jesus had given the novice many graces. The possessed did not want to come near the hermitage, much less enter it. It was necessary to have the order of authority to overcome her resistances. As she approached the threshold of the hermitage, the devil left her. Immediately a flood of tears flowed down the novice's face. But Satan came back right away and she cried out, "Let us get out of here, let us get out of here!"

The initial possession lasted for eight days. According to Sr. Mary's prediction, she would be temporarily liberated by Sunday so that she could confess and go to Communion. "I was in a black sea," she recounted. "Up to the present I could rise my head above the water a little. I always see the same sea before me; it is coming and advancing. I do not have a single good thought or feeling." The good Father Manaudas talked with her. She went down the parlor to receive his encouragement and counsels, then she went to the Choir to recite the little Hours.

At noon, the battle began anew; the second legion entered her. It was noticed at once that this new group which came was more powerful and more wicked than the first. Fr. Manaudas was able to deliver her for some minutes in the name of Jesus, and was able to make her do some acts of resignation and of love. It was a bad day. Only the scapular of Mother Elijah had the power to calm her. At three o'clock she became calm. She merited from all this by making offerings of love of God and of charity for the sisters. "My God," she said, "I am so miserable. I do not merit that anyone would do anything for me. You are all so good! I sense that you are praying and may all the sisters pray for me." We see here the great importance of the prayers of intercession by others for someone afflicted by the devil.

Satan wanted very much to prevent the novice from taking her meals to kill her but Mother Elijah succeeded in preventing this foul plan of the devil. Nonetheless, he used to the very limits the permission to torment her body. One of the most sadistic attacks of the devil was when nails of iron passed through the stomach of the victim. Her body was also tormented like water shaken by a strong wind. Her cries were frightening, her sufferings horrible. Her

preternatural strength doubled that it was impossible for the sisters to restrain her.

Only the words of a priest held power to restrain her during these moments. During moments of lucidity, she would kiss the stole of the priest with much love which was placed repeatedly on her during her crisis. She said, “This is a linen of my Mother the Church.” We may notice in this and other parts of the story that the saint would be moving back and forth from the state of possession to oppression since there would be times when she would be conscious of what was going on and be able to respond to what was happening. These moments of consciousness were times when she could gain the most merit since her intellect and will were free to act through prayers and other manifestations of love and self-offering.

By order of the priest, as was mentioned earlier, the devil kept silent during the night. He promised to take vengeance against this violence imposed on him. Satan made the novice deaf, and sometimes mute. Authority, in the person of her superior, would then intervene, “By obedience speak; by obedience, listen.” The then novice would again be able to speak and hear.

The devil was once asked to speak in Latin. “No, no! This evil language had made me suffer too much. I will never consent. I cannot stand it.” Here we see the abhorrence of the devil to the Latin language which had tormented him for centuries since it was for the longest time the official language of the Church. Solemn exorcisms done in Latin are perceived to be more effective than when said in the vernacular.

The devil insulted the sisters and the Prioress. He insulted Mother Elijah’s authority because of the power she had received from God to fight him. We see here how God truly allows grace to flow through the superior, hence obedience to lawful Church superiors allows grace to flow to those who obey while those in disobedience are cut off from the source of grace. He tried hard to find the means to strangle his victim: he made her swallow a quantity of pins and broken glass. Only the vigilance of the sisters prevented these “accidents.” Sometimes if the sisters could not prevent such occurrences, a single word of command under obedience from the superior would suffice to make her reject these diabolical objects.

Rare were the moments of respite for the novice; when the devil would quit for a while by the order of God, she would then cry out these sublime words, “To suffer until the end of the world, O my God—if that is your will, your pleasure—I will suffer always all that you would want me to suffer. I have no desire but your pleasure. Jesus, make me do your will!” A courage like this which was heroic doubled the rage of the devil. He would cry out and hurl himself; he would scream and blaspheme. The sight of a priest also made him get out of control.

On the Friday of the second week of the possession, Satan refused to obey. “I will not submit,” he cried out, “even in the name of obedience, even in the name

of Jesus Christ. Nobody can have the right to command me. I am the master. I shall crush this little Arab." "That is true," said Fr. Manaudas. "We are but nothing; we are sin. But I am the priest of Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, I order you to obey." He prostrated thus, also all the sisters. Satan was vanquished; he confessed his defeat, "A thousand like you will have no power over me but this act of humility conquers my power." Here the virtue of humility where divine power is given full capacity to operate truly defeats the devil and his minions.

The Lord obliged the demon to reveal by the mouth of the possessed the plans and ruses that he employs and uses to tempt the religious. The devil cried, "I caused to fall one religious in England. She has been ours since yesterday. According to our habitual tactic, when we attack a consecrated soul, we start by tempting her in little things. We are able to succeed in making her believe that she is not well loved by her superior in the same way as the others. How many souls in religion have been taken by these nets—in entertaining the thought that they have been judged as not good enough and that they are not loved. We gain others by their curiosity, by their desire to know and see everything. If those who have pronounced the three bad words (the vows) go to find the old woman (the superior) and do what she says, we lose everything. To triumph over a soul who has pronounced the three bad words is greater for us than to be master of a whole city."

Until this moment, Satan has tried in vain to frighten Fr. Manaudas and the sisters with his violence. He tried a different tactic by having recourse to flattery. He said to the sisters, "How kind you are! How holy you all are. What great multitude of souls are saved by your penances!" The entire community prostrated on the floor and the devil declared that it had lost because of this act of humility.

On the Sunday of August 2, a new legion came to possess the novice's body. Souls in purgatory delivered by the merits of Sister Mary during this long and frightening martyrdom became more numerous. On the 17th of August, Fr. Manaudas, who had been to Bayonne, gave an account to the Bishop of the diocese, Msgr. Lacroix. He came back to the Carmel of Pau carrying an authoritative letter from His Excellency. Some of the contents of the letter follow:

> My Daughter,
>
> You have the name of Mary of Jesus Crucified and this name is a great grace and a very great favor. It is the holy Virgin who had wanted that you carry her name and it is Jesus Crucified who has deigned to give you his and to associate you to his sufferings… Jesus who has made you entirely for himself also wants that you live a life of pain, temptation, struggles, trials, and fights against the demons and sin. But he wants you to conquer by divine power, just like the way he has done it himself.

After having permitted the temptations of the demons against him, he has allowed the same to be done against you. But he will conquer them in you as he had conquered them in himself. He will chase them out as he has chased them in the course of his evangelical life in all the places they could be found. He will crush them; he will reduce them to impotence after humiliating them and confounding them. It is by the cross that Jesus had conquered hell; and the nail which has attached him to the cross has chained the demons—his crown of thorns had become a crown of glory.

Therefore, O my Daughter, always be Mary of Jesus Crucified. I will not want to give you another name and I do not want you to be given another… I send you another one like myself, the Venerable Superior of my Seminary, to whom I delegate my power, which means that all the divine Savior has given to his Apostles and successors, when he said: "Exorcise demons." And they are obliged to obey the supreme Master. Have confidence then, my Daughter, total confidence. The victory is assured.

I shall continue to pray on the mountain and with all my strength. Every day you will be beside Jesus on the altar; each day I shall let loose on you the blood of Jesus Crucified and this Adorable Blood will vivify your soul and fill it with heavenly graces.

Signed:

FRANCOIS, sinner unworthy but servant of God and all for him

Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, delivered from the possession for an instant, interrupted the reading of this admirable letter with emotion filled with humility.

From time to time, Satan announced that he would come out of the body of the novice to go out and tempt souls, as he said in the preceding days. When he returned, he would recount his adventures, "This morning I caused a sister to drown (in sin); I tried to push a woman in the same crime who was made miserable by her husband. After some hours, I succeeded." He continued, "A religious man does us much harm. We have tried to insinuate and to impose on him some corporal penitence outside obedience. He listened to our suggestions, believing that he was listening to the voice of God. Give us more time or a few days and he will be ours."

At the designated hour, the struggle again began. A piece of the "soutane" of Pope Pius IX was put on the victim. "Take that away," cried the devil, "it is the white evil." Here we see the use of relics in tormenting the devil. Until the end of the thirtieth attack, the sorrows and the blasphemies increased in intensity. But nothing could be more touching, more pious, and even more beautiful than the words Sr. Mary uttered after each new assault. Let us cite here some examples:

"I unite myself with Jesus in the Garden of Olives. May you be blessed my

God." "I unite myself with Jesus when he carried the cross in the streets of Jerusalem; may you be blessed, my God." "I unite my sufferings with that of Jesus betrayed by Judas. May you be blessed, my God." "I unite myself with Jesus falling under the weight of the cross. May you be blessed, my God."

Thirty assaults were done to her and always the victory was on the side of Sister Mary. God rewarded these victories; thirty souls of sinners who died that day were given before death the privilege of being reconciled with God; all thanks to the tortures of this heroic victim. These souls came to greet her and thank her.

Satan, by the mouth of the possessed, continued to recount his victories and defeats. "We do not like the unity among community members; all our efforts hold together to introduce discord in the Community." We see here how a united community is a powerful weapon against the devil and his minions. He also stated, "The three most powerful things against us are: charity, humility, and obedience." "There is one religious who irritates us very much; we are not able to take her over at any point. We batter her; we give her fever… she is often incapacitated and cannot walk, yet she is always faithful. It is impossible to gain a single thread over her. She listens to the superior; she obeys her confessor. We are able to succeed to put all the community against her; yet instead of being irritated or discouraged, she humbles herself." The devil spoke of other persons in the world and in religious life: some would listen to the devil's (and his minions) temptations and fall while others refuse their attacks and escape their rages.

In one instance in the garden, the devil, through the possessed, shook with fierce strength a tree filled with fruits. There was a move from the sisters to prevent her from doing so. "Let me do it," Satan said, "I am not doing anything bad. The bad fruits, those starting to decay, will fall to the ground but the good fruits will stay up in the tree! This is how we shake the world; the wicked ones fall, the good stay."

Among the confessions of Satan, this one merits to be mentioned: "It has been six years now that we are attacking a Carmelite in Spain. The first two years we did everything to inspire her with an antipathy for one of her companions; we pushed her in order for her not to talk with this companion (so that they will not be on speaking terms); even to look at her. She did the opposite. The Master permitted that it would be arranged that they be placed in the same work by authority; this is where we tried to make her impatient; but she then showed even greater support for her companion. The charity was even more perfect. We tempted her against purity, against mortification, against humility and always without success…When we whispered to her to ask for extraordinary penances, she was contented to only observe the Rule…This miserable nun always crushes us down."

The days of trial were about to come to an end. On his part, the Bishop of Bayonne did not forget this victim of Jesus. He was updated as to the diverse

phases of the exceptional diabolical possession. He wrote a second letter to the novice, Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified:

My Daughter,

When the Son, the only Son of God, came in his great charity to save us and destroy the empire of the devil which had to be conquered and subjugated, he presented himself to this terrible enemy not in a burst of light and manifestation of his power and majestic infinity but in the most humble and abject state of being as if the least of men, a man of sorrows and sickness with a torn body in spittle and flowing blood; with a crown of thorns on his head, suspended on a gibbet with infamous reputation; his hands and feet nailed to a cross; and it is in this state where he had wanted to measure up with the strongest army with all its rage and sustained by the powers of the world and of hell… to show that the weakest in appearance is the strongest of all and in order also to confound forever the pride of the prince of darkness, crushing and despoiling him, snatching all his conquests and reducing him to impotence by the most simple means of humility, suffering, and by total nakedness.

It is thus that the Son of God had wanted to fight and conquer the great enemy of the human race; it is in the same manner that he wanted to fight and conquer paganism and all the persecutors of the Church; the torments and the blood of the martyrs had been the instruments of his victory… the weapons of Jesus must also be our weapons; it is with the same weapons that we conquer and that will make the Church triumph.

God chooses those who are weakest in the world, those who are despised—to confound those in the world who have the appearance of strength, the greatest and the highest. It is for the same reason, my daughter, that the divine Savior has chosen yourself… to oppose the devil and his infernal legions and armies of rage against the Church: you are nothing and this nothingness is sufficient to conquer all the demons and render them impotent… Courage then, O my daughter; have courage, faithful servant of Jesus Crucified; live firmly and full of confidence until the end. Jesus Crucified is all-powerful, all-protection, and all-glory. It is necessary that you fall at his feet, that all knees bend before him in the heavens, on earth, and in hell…

—Francois, Bishop of Bayonne
Servant of Jesus Crucified

To the measure by which Fr. Manaudas kept reading the admirable letter, so the devil also manifested his rage. It was September 2. The last days of the possession were to be on September 3 and 4, 1868.

Before leaving the body of the novice, Satan had obtained from God the permission to make her go through 100 final attacks in order, like Job, to tempt her to complain.

The first assault began. It was terrible; the victim even vomited blood. But right after the assault she said, “Oh, I offer my sufferings to Jesus and I am ready to endure everything which he would want me to go through with pleasure and with love. My God, may you be blessed.”

The second attack followed immediately. Fr. Manaudas approached and placed the crucifix on the lips of the novice so she could kiss it. The devil spat on it and blasphemed. Coming to herself, the Sister said, “I offer my sufferings in union with Jesus with the martyrs for the triumph of the Church. My God, may you be blessed.”

Satan began his attack anew: “Prepare the coffin!” he cried out. “Prepare the coffin!” and he spat on the cross, making horrible facial contortions. “We are 100! We are 100 demons!” he hurled. He barked and his movements shook the bed. After this third attack the Sister said, “I desire to suffer, to be immolated, to rot until the end of the world for the triumph of the Church. My God, may you be blessed.”

The devil continued to spit on the cross which the priest presented to the possessed. The victim endured an ineffable martyrdom. Then she said, “I unite myself with Jesus on Calvary, immolating myself with him for the conversion of sinners. My God, may you be blessed.”

The devil made grimaces at Fr. Manaudas. “Monsignor Pastor,” he said, snickering and giggling, “your trip to Bayonne from Pau will not be lost; tomorrow you will bury the Arab.”

“I shall do my duty,” the priest responded. “If she dies, I will bury her. But no, she will not die. It is you who will be confounded by her.” The cries of the victim were frightening but soon she said, “I offer my sufferings with that of Jesus in his hidden life; I offer them for the blind who do not yet know the Church so that they may come to this knowledge. My God, may you be blessed.”

As the 100 diabolical attacks continued, there occurred the blaspheming of the relics of the saints, the devil trying to strike the head of Mother Elijah, and the possessed howling like a beast. The suffering of the novice caused tears to fall from the eyes of all those present. The devil cried out, “I am the tempter, I am the tempter,” “I am the tempter; I sow division everywhere. I do what I like!”

Sr. Mary continued her admirable acts of faith and self-offering.

“I am losing all, I am losing all!” cried the demon with despair. I will go to ask the Master that I will not tempt her anymore.” The possessed fell down as if dead. But Satan came back quickly. After this attack the novice said, “Satan, you tempt me against the Church? I love the Church, she is my Mother! All your attacks against her are necessary to show your malice and your weakness. Your temptations give us light… My Mother the Church will not fall. It is you, Satan, who will fall. You had once fallen from heaven. Since then you are always

falling. If men saw this they will never follow you." "You try to cause me boredom? I am joyful. You try to make me discouraged? I have confidence in God. By myself, I am but the little nothing. By Jesus, I will be above you. You see how I mock you. Jesus is my light. Jesus chooses the weakest. Because I am weak, Jesus chose me."

The future saint also proclaimed later, "You say there is no God? I go to the garden to contemplate creation; I see the little trees becoming big ones; this sight makes my faith grow," "You tempt me against the Church? I go again to the garden; I find a fruit and open it. I look at this opened fruit and I see the seeds inside this fruit. I enter a church; I open the Tabernacle and I find the Eucharist. You tempt me against charity? I descend. I consider the beasts or animals. I see the lamb, the chicks; I see them together, they are united. I see on a single tree plenty of fruits. I am in religious life. I see myself like a fruit with many other fruits in the same branch on the same tree. Oh, how I love charity! You tempt me against the confessor? When I confess, I do not look at the man; I confess to Jesus."

After each assault, the novice continued to confound the enemy in praising God and renewing her acts of faith, hope, and love. The novice said, "I thirst, I thirst only for Jesus. Blessed are the souls who suffer in secret, knowing God alone! How I love suffering—suffering with patience and hidden with God alone!"

The devil shouted at the sisters who were taking down notes, "Miserable wretches! You are writing! All that is evil, like you all! All of that is not good, fit only to be thrown into the fire. Nothing is true!" She said to the devil, "Well, Satan? What did you say? You believe that everybody will become proud like you? No, no! There is a great number of hidden saints on earth. Miserable wretch, you see nothing but death. If one can see even just your face, everyone will fly away from you. You are so ugly! There is no one here below as ugly as you are! If I knew how to paint…! Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, always inspire me! Show to all men the malice of Satan!" "You said you are god? If you were, come; create a tree, make it come out of the earth so they can be seen. Unfortunate are those who follow you!" "You say, Satan, that it is you who inspire repugnance towards authority? I am well-advised. Now I know it. I can say that again. You work to create division? You will not succeed."

"Miserable wretch," cried Satan. "You are not fed up? For a long time I have followed her; I cannot stay any longer. I will vomit you out! I will never enter a house like this ever again!"

After some time, with the small voice of a child the novice said, "I see a tiny light, I see a small door which leads to Jesus; it is not too far. I sense that the black sea will soon go away… I see Jesus; he is extending his arms towards me; he waits for me to purify and refresh me." And she smiled.

The devil wanted to go out of the body of the possessed before the end of the 100th attack since he was continually being humiliated and defeated. And as the

sisters around the novice smiled when they were listening to the confessions of its weaknesses and impotence, the devil manifested ferocity and it insulted them. He cursed the day when he started these attacks against the novice. “Holy Virgin, deliver the souls who follow Satan.” Three times she repeated this prayer and she added with a very small voice, “I see a little the dawn; I have a glimpse of the door: Jesus is arriving; the day is coming in silence, gently, softly. It is not like you, Satan. You come with so much noise. Glory to Jesus! Glory to Mary! Shame to Satan! Satan, these words will crush you. Good! I will always repeat them! I will say them in my heart…

The end of the terrible 100 assaults approached. The bed of fine metal on which the heroic victim was laid since the start of the combat was totally damaged. It was necessary to place her on another bed. The final attack was truly terrifying; the face and hands of Sister Mary became as red as fire and then became black. Smoke emanated from all over her body; a strong odor of sulfur could be smelled. The Sister could hardly breathe. But soon a very, very strong cry of a whistle could be heard. It was like that of a locomotive. They counted almost 19 whistling sounds. It was the end of the struggle.

A celestial vision came to console the heroic victim. She could not utter any word nor make any movement. Her mouth opened once as if dumb. Fr. Manaudas approached her as if to hear her breathing. It was noon, the hour when most often, the possession would begin and which had gone on for 40 days.

The scene then radically changed. Suddenly, Sr. Mary of Jesus Crucified stood up on the bed. Her face was radiant, her eyes brilliant like two diamonds; a celestial smile played on her lips. All the assisting sisters knelt down. All at once their mouths formed one word, “Jesus!” The joy of heaven was in all their hearts and was expressed in gentle tears. They could sense that Jesus passed over the body of the Sister to heal her.

“Jesus is my sweet refreshment!” said the novice in ecstasy.

Later when the ecstasy ceased, the novice kept the joy in her soul and was manifested on her face. She kissed with gratitude the hands of Fr. Manaudas; she effusively thanked the sisters for their care; she embraced them and joyfully said, “I feel the joy even in my bones, in the innermost part of my bones.”

Some of the future saint’s words after the combat with the infernal spirit were:

“Satan will tempt you; be stronger than Satan. These temptations are good for you; it is the water that washes away and makes you clean for Jesus. Reflect well that today you are on earth, tomorrow you will be underneath the earth.”

“God does not permit temptation which will not be of use for our growth.”

“In working, in obeying, in playing, in eating, in resting, whatever you do

always look at Jesus."

SITUATIONER

Demonology Today

"We preach this, not because our discourse about the devil is sweet to us, but because the doctrine about him is full of security for you."

—St. John Chrysostom

"Some of you might say: 'But Father, how old fashioned you are to speak about the devil in the 21st century!' But look out because the devil is present! The devil is here… even in the 21st century! …We must learn from the Gospel how to fight against Satan."

—Pope Francis, Saturday, 12 April 2014

Here in the Philippines, evil has affected society as has never been before and the priests, religious, and devoted lay Catholics of the Church are fighting in many fronts, from social injustice, moral decline, especially among the youth, political instability, corruption in all strata of society, anti-life issues such as contraceptives and abortion, the rise of the New Age movement, proliferation of sects, cults, and false Christian religions, the growing attraction of the youth to the occult and witchcraft, Satanism, the economic crisis, loss of direction of the youth due to the loss of our many cultural and religious traditions, broken homes and dysfunctional families, sexual deviancies, physical and sexual abuses, materialism and secularism, hedonism, proliferation of drugs, easy access to pornography, addiction in its varied forms, misuse of the media and the internet and the like; there is a war for souls going on all around us and the laborers in the vineyard of the Lord are not only few in number, they are spread too thin due to the many moral and spiritual battlefronts.

With all these challenges facing Philippine society, no wonder the devil has so much power today. We ourselves have given him so much space in our society. It is so that he is now able to brazenly come out in the open in a spiritual battle that is both very tangible and therefore also terrifying. We find ourselves in a battle that can be compared to the situation during the early Church wherein

extraordinary demonic activity was a common experience that exorcists, both lay and priests, abounded. As one of my professors in Rome stated, “The devil has brought about a dominant culture that makes possession common again.”

What precisely has given the devil and his minions this tremendous power today which makes him so bold? It is the general loss of faith and the loss of a sense of sin in society. The sin against the Holy Spirit has already become a general state of affairs. Sins like abortion, homosexual unions, lust, contraceptives, euthanasia, and more, are not anymore seen as sins and anyone who still has a correct conscience and says differently gets persecuted.

Possession, demonic oppression, and infestation are words that are now becoming more and more familiar in our society as well as all around the globe. Our present Pope speaks constantly about this demonic entity that is very much alive and active today.

United States Report[1]

Rev. David Fleming… is one of 50 U.S. priests recently chosen to train in the rite of exorcism.

It is the Church’s first effort in the United States to coordinate a “comprehensive and systematic formation process for this particular ministry,” Fleming told the Catholic Mirror, Des Moines’ diocesan newspaper.

It is a big moment for exorcists. Dioceses in Italy and Spain are also increasing their ranks because of an “unprecedented rise” in demonic possession, Madrid Archbishop Antonio Maria Rouco said last year, after nominating eight priests to undergo training to rid people of their demons.

Church leaders attribute the rise in possessions to people who are dabbling in the occult: practicing witchcraft, visiting a psychic, even playing with an Ouija board.

Mexico Report[2]

To some it may seem extraordinary, but priests say the country is under attack by Satan, and that more exorcists are needed to fight him.

“The Lord wants to have here a ministry of exorcism and liberation, for the fight against the Devil,” says Father Carlos Triana, a priest and an exorcist, in Mexico City.

Mexico’s exorcists say there is unprecedented demand for their services. Some are even not taking new cases, as they are having to exorcise demons almost every day. “This didn’t happen before,” says Father Francisco Bautista, another exorcist in Mexico City.

Italy Report[3]

November 6, 2014 (CNA/EWTN News), Catholic experts say occult activity and the resulting need for exorcisms have reached a critical level.

Just prior to the season of all things supernatural, the International Association of Exorcists (AIE) met for their 12th annual conference in Rome, from October 20-25.

According to AIE spokesperson Dr. Valter Cascioli, an increasing number of bishops and cardinals asked to participate in the conference due to an increase in demonic activity.

"It's becoming a pastoral emergency," Cascioli told CNA. "At the moment the number of disturbances of extraordinary demonic activity is on the rise."

The International Association of Exorcists, whose 250 exorcists are placed all over the world, has noticed an increase in demonic activity irrespective of particular places or cultures.

"We know that in some countries of the world, there are no exorcists, and demonic activity and its consequences are spreading all over the world," Cascioli said.

"So, it is truly becoming a pastoral emergency and this is why we have the necessity to combat this situation."

***Pope Blesses Work of Exorcists**[4]*
by Thomas D. Williams, PhD
28 October 2014

According to Pope Francis, priests devoted to the ministry of exorcism "manifest the Church's love and acceptance of those who suffer because of the devil's works."

Francis wrote these words in a message addressed to Fr. Francesco Bamonte, the president of the International Association of Exorcists, which is holding a convention in Rome this week. Vatican Radio has reported that more than 300 exorcists from around the world have participated.

This was the first conference to be held by the International Association of Exorcists since the Vatican formally approved its statutes this past June 13.

Fr. Bamonte said that the approval of the organization was "cause for joy not only for the association, but for the whole Church" and said that "God calls some priests to this important ministry of exorcism and deliverance" to be able to "accompany the persons with humility, faith, and charity."

Dr. Valter Cascioli, a psychiatrist and official spokesmen for the Association, told Vatican Radio that an increase in occultism and Satanism has "opened the door to demonic activity." The number of people taking part in these activities and "experiencing serious social, psychological, spiritual, and moral damage has been growing," Cascioli said, along with "an increase in other demonic phenomena such as vexations, obsessions, and especially diabolical possessions."

Pope Francis has spoken more insistently about the devil than his predecessors. Earlier this month, the Pope spoke of the devil's "patience" in his temptations, and his ability to come back time and again. In a homily last April, the Pope said to his listeners that "we are tempted; we are the object of the devil's attacks."

"Yes, the devil exists, the devil exists," the Pope repeated, "even in the 21st century!"

A pope who was given the great grace of foreseeing through a vision all that would happen in the near future was Pope Leo XIII who served the Church during the turn of the 20th century. A rather peculiar circumstance induced Pope Leo XIII to compose the Prayer to St. Michael. "What a horrible picture I was permitted to see!" He saw what was going to happen in the future, the misleading powers and the ravings of the devils against the Church in all countries. An eyewitness to the events behind the institution of the St. Michael Prayer eventually came forward. Writing in 1947, Fr. Domenico Pechenino, a priest who worked at the Vatican during the time of Leo XIII, provides a first-hand account of these events:

> "I do not remember the exact year. One morning, the great Pope Leo XIII had celebrated a Mass and, as usual, was attending a Mass of thanksgiving. Suddenly, we saw him raise his head and stare at something above the celebrant's head. He was staring motionlessly, without batting an eye. His expression was one of horror and awe; the colour and look on his face changing rapidly. Something unusual and grave was happening in him."
>
> "Finally, as though coming to his senses, he lightly but firmly tapped his hand and rose to his feet. He headed for his private office... About half an hour later, he called for the Secretary of the Congregation of Rites and, handing him a sheet of paper, requested that it be printed and sent to all the ordinaries around the world... It is the plea to Mary and the passionate request to the Prince of the heavenly host, (St. Michael: Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle) beseeching God to send Satan back to hell."
>
> We have to understand that extraordinary demonic activity such as possession, oppression, obsession, and infestation are merely the tip of the iceberg since the devil's main tactic is always to attack in a secret and hidden manner.
>
> There are two reasons that I see why the devil will always try to remain hidden. First, a person who is not able to detect the devil acting behind the scenes either blames God for his sufferings or, if he is of little faith, he ceases to believe in a loving God. And second, a person is better conquered when he does not know that he is under attack.

"Our enemy may also be compared in his manner of acting to a false lover. He seeks to remain hidden and does not want to be discovered" (St. Ignatius of

Loyola).

"Satan has all the skill in the world to induce people to deny his existence" (St. John Paul II).

"In this generation, like so many others, people have been led to believe that the devil is a myth, a figure, an idea, the idea of evil. But the devil exists and we must fight against him" (Pope Francis).

So if the devil is now more brazen to come out in the open and manifest his presence, it only means one thing: the world has allowed him a power that is unprecedented in human salvation history. If extraordinary demonic activity is just the tip of the iceberg and which is already so common today, imagine the depths of evil that lie hidden "under the water."

All around, diabolical evil and inhuman violence has now become so common with millions of victims. And, of course, one of the clearest signs of the growing power of the devil is the ever growing persecution of Christians. More Christians were martyred in the 20th century than in all other centuries combined and the number continues to grow in the 21st century.

Pope Francis, last May 4, 2013, stated in very clear and emphatic terms, "So many Christian communities are persecuted around the globe. More so now than in the early times… Why? Because the spirit of the world hates."

Then Cardinal Ratzinger said to a group of bishops attending a seminar regarding the devil that he "is always at work… instigating untold cruelties, as unfortunately seen throughout the twentieth century."

The devil is behind the persecution of the Church as he was during her beginnings as we read in the Book of Revelation.

"Do not be afraid of anything that you are going to suffer. Indeed, the devil will throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will face an ordeal for ten days" (Revelation 2:10).

In a speech in the United States, St. John Paul II stated very clearly, "We are now standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has gone through. I do not think that wide circles of American society or wide circles of the Christian community realize this fully. We are now facing the final confrontation between the Church and the anti-Church, of the Gospel versus the anti-Gospel." He adds a prophetic statement that we are witnessing today, "We must be prepared to undergo great trials in the not-too-distant future, trials that will require us to be ready to give up even our lives, and a total gift of self to Christ and for Christ. Through your prayers and mine, it is possible to alleviate this tribulation, but it is no longer possible to avert it. ... How many times has the renewal of the Church been brought about in blood! It will not be different this time."

It would be good to meditate on the Book of Revelation as it unveils to us the true state of affairs in the world: how the devil is able to hide behind yet use very effectively political and economic structures to persecute the Church and limit its influence in the world. One just has to see how the Church is seen by governments as irrelevant, if not a cause of disruption in today's modern society. This is the devil working behind the scenes as seen in the Book of the Apocalypse.

Heinrich Schlier, Professor of Ancient Christian Literature and New Testament Exegesis in the University of Bonn, gives us a clear picture of what is occurring in today's world[5]:

- *St. Paul in the epistle to the Ephesians speaks about the abode of the demons being in "the high places"; these places are not heaven, where God is. They signify the "heavens" which surround and touch upon the material world and provide the dimensions in which everything material is contained.*
- *Demons live in this world and operate through it. They take possession of the world and of men in such a way that they let these appear in their spirit. Withdrawing and concealing themselves, they reveal themselves through the world and existence.*
- *In the book of the Apocalypse, Satan has assumed the image of the dragon; the beast is the apocalyptic image of the anti-Christian state. Satan exercises his power by lending it to the political powers, in order that they, by governing against Christ, may manifest and exercise it.*
- *The demons withdraw from sight into the men, elements, and institutions through which they make their power felt. To seem not to appear is part of their essence. They operate in society as the spirit of the world.*

This fact alone points out why it is so difficult to confront the devil directly in society; he hides behind human institutions with political, economic, and military power.

- *To act, think, or speak against this spirit of the world is regarded as non-sensical or even as wrong and criminal.*

We see this occurring now in the world where a Christian living up to the values of the Gospel can be dubbed an enemy of society and the State.

- *The domination which the prince of this world exercises over society is that he gives to the world his valuation on everything.*
- *These principalities exercise their being by taking possession of the world as a whole, and of individual men, the elements, political and social institutions, historical conditions and circumstances, spiritual and religious trends.*

We of the present generation are living in the latter days; the signs of the times found in the Book of Revelation are more and more becoming evident. Jesus said to St. Faustina of the Divine Mercy, "I bear a special love for Poland, and if she will be obedient to My will, I will exalt her in might and holiness. From her will come forth the spark that will prepare the world for My final coming" This spark that would prepare the world for the second coming of Jesus was no other than St. John Paul II, the Marian pope.

In the latter days, demons will have more power in the world and this will climax with the coming of the anti-Christ; the entire Church cannot anymore deny the drastic increase of demonic activity in the world. As Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich, the greatest visionary of the Church and beatified by St. John Paul II, tells us in one of her revelations, "In the center of Hell I saw a dark and horrible-looking abyss, and into this Lucifer was cast, after being first strongly secured with chains; thick clouds of sulphurous black smoke arose from its fearful depths and enveloped his fearful form in the dismal folds, thus effectually concealing him from every beholder. God himself had decreed this; and I was likewise told, if I remember right, that he will be unchained for a time fifty or sixty years before the year of Christ 2000… a certain number of demons are to be let loose much earlier than Lucifer, in order to tempt men, and to serve as instruments of divine vengeance." Let us therefore heed the words of Pope Paul VI who closed the Second Vatican Council: "This matter of the devil and of the influence he can exert on individuals as well as on communities, entire societies or events is a very important chapter of Catholic doctrine which should be studied again, although it is given little attention today."

We have so many programs and strategic plans to deal with all kinds of worldly problems, but have basically no comprehensive strategy to combat the demonic influence in the world. And this is very lamentable since the recent popes have pointed out how the devil is the primary and essential driving force of the evil occurring in the world today. Imagine a bunch of terrorist cells operating in a country where there are no counterterrorist agencies and programs in place; that country will sooner or later fall into anarchy. Imagine the Church continually being molested by innumerable hidden yet very dangerous adversaries; what unimaginable delights these beings enjoy going around unmolested, causing havoc wherever they desire because the spiritual resources and arsenals of the Church remain untapped.

We can see little by little the deteriorating effects of this sad state of affairs all around us. Very few in the Church focus on battling this ever-growing menace by limiting its spread through proactive measures, destroying demonic strongholds when they are found, rescuing those captured by the enemy, putting up proper defenses for the protection of the flock, properly utilizing the weapons of light and arming the faithful with them, and actively searching for these entities where they still remain hidden and uncontested. No wonder, based on my own experience and readings, demons have a special hatred for exorcists and

those who work in this ministry. I'm sure the demons hated Jesus in a singular way when he was casting them out of the people. Today, we need more people to combat the devil and his minions frontally and directly.

According to one of the Church's greatest mystic and visionary, Venerable Mary of Agreda, in her work, *The Mystical City of God*, "What wonder that Lucifer has entrenched himself so firmly in the world, when so many listen to him, accept and follow his deceits, so few resist him, and entirely forget the eternal death, which he so furiously and maliciously seeks to draw upon them? I beseech those, who read this, not to forget this dreadful danger. If they are not convinced of this danger through the evil condition of the world and through the evils each one experiences himself, let them at least learn of this danger by the vast and powerful remedies and helps, which the Savior thought it necessary to leave behind in His Church. For He would not have provided such antidotes if our ailment and danger of eternal death were not so great and formidable."

Many are afraid or hesitate to discuss anything that has to do with the devil. This is a big mistake. God in the Bible continually speaks about this enemy. Jesus in the Gospel spoke about the devil several times to his followers. Now if God himself sees this topic as relevant for our salvation, then we cannot close our ears to this topic; this would be very dangerous. Many are afraid of the topic because instead of trying to have a proper knowledge of who this fallen creature really is in the eyes of God, they learn and believe the sensational portrayal of this creature in the media. The proper study of demonology will destroy any fear of the devil since we will be able to perceive him as the Lord does; the study will give us a real and, therefore, a balanced view of this ancient enemy. This correct knowledge would then destroy the sensationalism and fascination behind the devil and put him back to his proper place and role in the life of a Christian. The two extremes of either having an undue fascination with the devil or not speaking about him at all are not proper Christian attitudes. Part of the race that St. Paul speaks about that all Christians must run is spiritual combat with the devil, hence this means that we must learn how to run that part of the race.

It must be noted that as we are followers of Jesus in this world, demonology helps us to better develop and solidify our Christian identity since Jesus himself had to contend with the devil; actually Jesus faced the devil before he started his public life. As disciples, we have to learn how the Lord dealt and defeated him since a true follower of the Lord would be placed automatically within the radar range of the devil. By studying the lives of the saints, one sees this reality all too easily. A number of saints have stated the reality that the devil does not harass his own, only those he sees as getting away from him.

"The greatest of all evils is not to be tempted, because then there are grounds for believing that the Devil looks upon us as his property" (St. Jean Marie Vianney).

"If you have no sufferings and no trouble, the devil is taking it easy. You are in

his hand" (Mother Teresa of Calcutta).

I summarize some of the thoughts of Heinrich Schlier, in his work, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament*, to stress my point regarding a spiritual war that is waging between the members of the Church and the devil's army.

The battle between the Church and the Devil in time[6]

- *Jesus has conquered the powers and principalities and they await only the final breaking of their power and their eternal damnation.*
- *But until then, they will be excluded from the place where Jesus Christ is.*
- *This implies that, until that moment, the principalities can always be driven from the place which Jesus Christ occupies on this earth as well, from the "body of Christ," which is the Church; and they have no choice but to yield.*
- *They have no other expectation than the final breaking of their power and their eternal damnation. The New Testament tells us that this can already be seen in their present nature and activity. It can be recognized in the first place in the growing frenzy of their nature in the world and in the concentration of their gradual attack on the Church.*
- *It can also be inferred in that there is one place in this world where they can never settle, but from which they will always be expelled; this place has been occupied and is held by Jesus Christ through his victory over the principalities; in it he continues until the end of time his conquest of these powers. This place is the Church on earth.*
- *Because he (the devil) realizes that the eternal power of Jesus Christ is already present in the Church, she becomes his principal target, the last stronghold which he wants to conquer either openly or by stealth, from outside or from within.*
- *As the Christians, when they were still pagans, were drawn into the orbit of idols, so even now they are in danger of falling under the power of the gods and demons.*
- *The Church is the realm in and through which the principalities are defeated time and again by Jesus Christ, and where their final ruin is foreshadowed.*
- *Through Baptism, we become members of the Body of Christ, the Church.*
- *Through Baptism, we are released from the subjection of the evil spirits.*
- *Baptism transfers our life to another dimension but still within the grasp of the principalities, exposed to their attacks, indeed more so than ever.*
- *But through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christians are enabled to ward off these assaults, and triumph over the demons, provided they remain in this new dimension of faith.*

- *"Giving thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light. He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son" Col 1:12-13.*
- *We Christians are not yet removed from the sphere where the demons operate; but by Baptism we can be safe in Jesus Christ in this place of perils.*
- *Baptism, therefore, places us in an exposed position to the principalities and powers who operate in the "heavens" of this world. But this is a privileged position because it is also a situation that exposes and opens us towards God.*
- *We are placed as men who "in Jesus Christ" have access to God.*
- *This access to God is what the devil tries to hinder through keeping men away from Baptism and prevent those baptized from abiding in Jesus.*
- *Having no other future than eternal damnation, the principalities concentrate their attack on those who have an eternal future, namely the Church and her members.*
- *The members of the Church who have already been delivered from the principalities in Baptism in Jesus Christ must resist them the more strongly. They must also endeavor through sacrifice to create in the Church a place free from their domination, as a sign of the new heavens and the new earth which are to come.*

"Let us always keep before our eyes the fact that here on earth we are on a battlefield and that in paradise we shall receive the crown of victory" (St. Padre Pio).

Christian life is "a constant battle against evil, just as Jesus during his life had to struggle against the devil and his many temptations. He came to defeat evil and defeat the prince of this world, defeat the devil. The devil tempted Jesus many times and Jesus experienced temptation and persecution throughout his lifetime. And he warned that whoever wants to follow Jesus must be aware of this reality" (Pope Francis).

We also can never fully understand man which includes his fallen nature and propensity to sin without understanding the devil. Actually, we will not be able to fully understand our redemption and what Jesus did for us without understanding also about the devil. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil and bring us out of the kingdom of darkness in order to bring us to his kingdom of light. Jesus confronted the devil at the beginning and end of his ministry. Jesus tangled with the devil and his demons continually during his ministry. Just right after his Baptism in the Jordan, he confronted the devil in the desert and even his first miracle after his Baptism was an exorcism. Casting out demons was not an add-on to the ministry of the Lord but an integral and indispensable element of his mission; it also witnessed to the authority that was in him. When

we therefore downplay this dimension in the life of Jesus, we will also distort our understanding of the person of Jesus. Jesus would not have been crucified without the devil since his crucifixion was the hour of Satan.

Studying demonology also makes us more aware of the love of Jesus for us. Our Lord tangled with the devil, we may say primarily, not using his full power as God but through his human nature (God allowed that he be lower than the angels for a time) so that by defeating this adversary through his humanity, we who are lower than the angels would never again have to be afraid of the devil and his minions and that we would even be able to trample them under our feet. God condescended to become man and do battle with a mere creation of his for love of us. This is something that we must reflect more about.

Now, why does God allow suffering? This is a reality we all face. To manifest his infinite love for us, Jesus himself endured suffering in all its forms and in their highest degree possible. He embraced suffering with love and obedience and therefore saved us all. Saints knew the meaning of suffering and therefore its true value. They were able to maximize suffering to gain a high degree of merit and give great glory to God. Similarly, we may ask ourselves, "Why does God allow the devil to continue to exist in this world and molest us?" Jesus himself took the worse that the devil could do to a human being and through it claimed victory for humanity. He allowed his human nature to be for a time subjected to the devil's most powerful onslaughts and through this destroyed humanity's slavery to the devil. Saints know why God allows the devil to still roam this earth; they know the meaning behind this reality and the true value that can be gained by properly responding to it. They were able to maximize the devil's attacks, both ordinary and extraordinary, in a spiritual combat that drew forth a high degree of merit for themselves and a high degree of glory for God. Spiritual warfare produces saints; but we must understand the hows and whys of it.

"As an artist, God makes use even of the Devil" (St. Augustine).

Reflecting on my own experiences in the ministry, I saw that demonology can be likened to your doctor who suddenly discovers a life-threatening disease in you during a casual visit. This discovery, although unpleasant, gives us now the chance to start the cure. Knowing about this other world can make us more focused on our soul and more aware of what is at stake, hence what is truly important in life. It helps us to view our life with a more supernatural perspective; it assists us to find more meaning in life; it makes us focus and depend on God more and helps us to get out of the mediocrity and routinariness that can sometimes plague our life. We must therefore avoid being reticent with regards to learning about the devil and spiritual warfare; we follow and model ourselves on Jesus and how he confronted the Devil.

St. Augustine tells us, "If in Christ we have been tempted, in Him we overcome the devil. Do you think only of Christ's temptations and fail to think

of His victory? See yourself as tempted in Him, and see yourself as victorious in Him. He could have kept the devil from Himself, but if He were not tempted, he could not teach you how to triumph over temptation."

Now Pope Francis makes a very serious statement for those who would rather keep far away from anything to do with the devil. He states and I quote, "Jesus fights against the devil, those who are not with Jesus are against Jesus." This means that those who prefer not to join our Lord in his battle against the kingdom of darkness cannot be part of his kingdom.

Studying demonology today is therefore a must for a Catholic but it must not simply be limited to just learning more facts about the devil and his minions; it must be a practical demonology. A practical knowledge of the devil will move one from being an armchair general to a general out there fighting in the trenches of the battlefield with his troops.

We must always remember that the devil, the flesh, and the world are the three enemies of the spiritual life; but it is the devil who is the most dangerous and this is where we must be particularly vigilant and be trained for combat.

"A dark and terrible enemy agent… a terrible, mysterious and fearsome reality… a live spiritual, perverted and perverting being… the enemy number one, the tempter par excellence, the hidden enemy who sows errors and misfortunes in human history" (Pope Paul VI on the devil, November 15, 1973).

"The temptation of the devils… is stronger than those of the world and the flesh, because the devils reinforce themselves with these other two enemies, the world and the flesh, in order to wage a rugged war" (St. John of the Cross).

The Philippine Setting

In the Philippine setting, our office, the Archdiocese of Manila Office of Exorcism (AMOE) has difficulty addressing properly and effectively all the cases being sent to us due to the sheer number of cases which is staggering, as well as due to the depths of the demonic bondages. People usually seek help from the Church when they have exhausted all other means and these other means that they have gone to are mostly occult and New Age in nature, hence when they come now to our office, these cases have become not only complicated but the demonic is already deeply entrenched. And many of them come to us with very little that is Catholic in their lives in terms of moral values and practice. Our office has to deal not only with the spiritual effects of the demonic contamination of our Catholic faith (which will be discussed in the succeeding chapters) but also the moral effects of this demonic contamination (which will be discussed in a much later chapter) which are a real hindrance to the growth of the victim's spiritual life and therefore his spiritual liberation as well.

With God's grace, the Catholic Church in the Philippines is now beginning to respond to this rise of extraordinary demonic activity although there are still certain challenges to be faced.

One challenge is this: the task of combating the evil which has given the devil so much power today is a duty of the entire Church, not only of the hierarchy and of the religious but also of the laity. If we expect only 1% in the Church to combat evil and sin, then we will truly lose a lot of ground because evil can take over more and more areas in the lives of individual Catholics as well as on society as a whole. A lay person who is truly a disciple of Jesus is a Christian first and a citizen of society second; we must remember that this will be the only way to transform our present society just as the early Christians transformed the entire pagan Greco-Roman Empire. Christ has already triumphed over the devil through the power of the cross; we his disciples are called to live out this victory in our day-to-day lives that others can learn by our example. We are called in Jesus' Name to destroy the remnants of the devil's kingdom around us which are the personal and societal structures of evil and sin.

Another challenge is that priests, who should be in the forefront in the spiritual war against the devil, are few in number and are already overworked in their different ministries and parishes. There are less than 8,000 priests for the millions of Filipinos. And how many of them have received adequate training in spiritual warfare and the ministry of liberation? The good news is that more and more priests, especially of the younger generation, are seeing the need for this ministry and are eager to rise to the challenge. They are open to be formed and trained in this, we may say, ancient manner of spiritual combat. During the last ordination that I attended, as I embraced the young newly ordained priest during the Mass, imagine my surprise when of all the things he could have said (and he did not need to say anything), he told me right then and there with zeal and eagerness that he wanted to join me in the ministry of exorcism! And he was even from a faraway diocese. These are good signs indeed; in every century, when there was a particular spiritual need in the Church, the Lord would always inspire those who had given their lives to him to respond to this need of the faithful.

So, it is a good sign that when, decades before, there was hardly any exorcist in our country, now we see a continually growing number of priest exorcists training and engaging in the ministry of liberation. When I was new in the ministry, during the time of Jaime Cardinal Sin, I looked in vain for a trained exorcist to guide me and could not find anyone in the Philippines. I didn't even have a copy of the old Roman Ritual of Exorcism. Since I couldn't find one, then I got a xeroxed copy downloaded from the internet.

I am also grateful to the Lord that a large number of seminarians all around the country are now showing interest to train for this ministry of liberation, spiritual combat, and exorcism. I know this from my own personal experience in giving talks and seminars in seminaries and houses of formation all around the

country for a number of years now. The religious and the laity are also growing in their numbers to meet this challenging and reemerging ministry. I have given hundreds of talks to religious and lay groups and their response has always been positive and one of zeal. They are ready to join courageously the Church, the Body of Christ, to engage in the spiritual war.

"The peace of Jesus is the fruit of a constant struggle against evil. The battle that Jesus has decided to fight is not against men or human powers but against the enemy of God and man, Satan" (Pope Benedict XVI).

Today, a vacuum in the ministry of liberation, spiritual combat, and exorcism which has existed for decades is now starting to be addressed. The Archdiocese of Manila has been continually training priests from other dioceses in this ministry and at present more and more bishops are appointing exorcists for their respective dioceses. As of the moment, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines headed by Archbishop Socrates Villegas has plans with our office and the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas to open an institute for the formation and proper training of exorcists, hopefully, by next year. Experts from abroad, especially from the Vatican, are at the moment being tapped as professors and instructors. This is to address the need to train and form the growing number of exorcists appointed by their respective bishops. A one-on-one approach as done in the olden days of training exorcists can no longer meet this growing demand. More exorcists will be needed in the future to fill the vacuum as more and more Catholics, through evangelization, are beginning to turn away from the thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of occult practitioners in our country and are now turning back to the Church to seek the necessary spiritual assistance. Hopefully, this institute will also train later on, the religious (non-clerics) and lay collaborators of the exorcists.

It must be remembered that during the time of our Lord, his exorcisms were almost as common as his healings; today with so much evil and sin, the ministry of liberation and exorcism cannot be left behind. Unless this vacuum is adequately filled, we will continue to see many Catholics encountering preternatural and paranormal problems, ending up with magicians, spiritists, shamans, witch-doctors, fortune-tellers, faith-healers, sorcerers, and witches. If the victims of these occult practitioners are not warned and helped, in due time, they can either end up mentally ill and institutionalized or led to commit suicide. We have not even touched on the effects on the spiritual life of the person. It must always be remembered that every benefit gained from the occult causes more demons to attach to the person and the bondage to the devil becomes even deeper. In our office, there are many sad stories narrated by those who turn to occult practitioners for assistance and ended up with much more spiritual problems.

Sometimes we cannot blame a Catholic when he searches for spiritual help outside the Catholic Church, when he searches for assistance outside of Jesus.

As previously mentioned, priests generally have not been trained in the seminary regarding the charisms of healing and deliverance, much more about exorcism. That is why many Filipinos rarely seek assistance from the Church when they have maladies that neither doctors nor psychiatrists can find any cause for. Because of lack of knowledge regarding preternatural problems, priests would send victims away identifying or concluding that their maladies as purely psychological. There is no proper training in the seminary on how to diagnose and discern when an affliction has a demonic origin or none. We, priests, need to begin now to update ourselves for the sake of our faithful!

According to Bishop Andrea Gemma (Italy), the only bishop who is also a full-time exorcist, in his pastoral letter to his priests dated June 29, 1992, "Aren't the holy ministers aware that their very indifference towards people often forces simple and uninformed faithful to turn to soothsayers and witches or other fallacious practices which are, alas, the Devil's advantageous means for his action and victory? Do not ever get tired of keeping your faithful as far away as possible from those people."

This matter of diagnosing and discerning was no problem for Christ who easily perceived when a seemingly physical and psychological problem had a demonic cause behind it. The evil spirits could not hide from Jesus, hence the number of exorcisms in the Gospel is staggering. They were almost as common as those who were sick and sought healing from the Lord.

It is very sad that Catholics can sometimes forget or be ignorant that authentic supernatural healing and liberation can only come from God through Christ. Jesus is *The Healer and The Exorcist* because he is God. And he has given this same authority to us who comprise his Body, the Church. Just imagine if Jesus and later on, his apostles and disciples, never practiced his authority to exorcise! Countless would have been left in the hands of the devil, destroyed not only physically and psychologically, but also spiritually. We cannot allow this to happen in our generation.

" 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give' " (Matthew 10:7-8).

"He summoned the Twelve and he gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases" (Luke 9:1).

In the more than ten years in this ministry, I saw the great need for this ministry, as well as the lack of resources and knowledge in our parish churches to respond properly to those asking for help. The power of God's love that destroys demonic strongholds in individuals, families, and communities has still to be fully utilized.

The struggle to combat evil and sin as well as to do battle directly against their main instigator, the devil, will not be easy, that is why it is called a spiritual

war, and the conflict will require heroism on our part; but we must always keep in mind that we are already on the winning side. At Confirmation, we were made soldiers of Christ to fight under his banner; yes, we will be wounded many times but the essential thing is to keep on fighting so that when the Lord is finally glorified and all are placed under his feet, those who fought with the most devotion although battle-scarred will also share in proportion the Lord's joy and glory.

"When a soldier is at war, he gets wounded and slows down a bit. No one can be so rigorous or so naïve as to consider it criminal. The only ones who do not get wounded are those who remain at the sidelines; those who furiously launch themselves against the enemy are the ones who get hit" (St. John Chrysostom).

Training the Modern Exorcist

In the past number of years, I have been training exorcists and most of them are still quite young. It is not easy to train exorcists since one does not merely train them with the necessary skills but one must form in them the proper dispositions that make them effective instruments in the hands of God and protected from demonic harassment and retaliation. It is important to mentor them personally because once they start, this experience of the spiritual world will totally change them and they will need someone to guide them during these times of transition.

Training new exorcists whether from Manila or from the other dioceses can be both exhilarating and challenging. The zeal of new exorcists and their enthusiasm for the ministry inspire me. I also enjoy their company. We share, aside from the rigors of the ministry, many beautiful experiences of God's presence. Many have the notion that exorcists are solemn-faced, never smiling older ministers; this is not true. Exorcists share many enjoyable and uplifting moments of consolation. The brotherhood among exorcists can run deep since, just like soldiers who fight side by side in the same bloody battlefield, exorcists share a common experience that is uniquely bonding. This experience cannot just be shared with anybody, because it is a completely different experience which gives a glimpse into a totally alien world.

When AMOE starts to give the exorcist trainee his first few cases, a veteran exorcist has to be present to assist him in his encounter with a demoniac, and this includes his first taste of diabolical psychic attacks. These demonic attacks that can occur before, during, and after the exorcism session are harassments from the demons so that the new exorcist backs down from the encounter. These psychic attacks are wide ranging and would be unique to each exorcist. Some examples which exorcists experience during the sessions and where I was present were bodily pains like headaches and stomachaches, pin pricks, lockjaw, seeing frightening apparitions, temporary loss of sight, hearing demonic sounds, mental distractions, difficulty in breathing, coldness in the body, etc. But as the exorcist gains more faith and confidence, these oppressions during sessions should disappear totally. I had my own fair share when I was new in the ministry; but today, I do not experience anymore demonic psychic attacks

during exorcism sessions.

I sometimes train new exorcists by batches so that I can train them faster. This method has worked especially in such instances where one exorcist-in-training gets exhausted (this is normal with new exorcists), then another can easily take his place or when the one who is exorcising gets psychically attacked during the session, and cannot continue, a reserve is ready to take his place.

New exorcists usually have many questions unique to each and these have to be answered adequately since souls are at stake and what they learn in the beginning affect their perception and actions in the ministry for the coming years. They also have certain confusions and even fears (which is normal) that have to be responded to and alleviated, especially when they experience their first few diabolical encounters. An important point to remember is that new exorcists have to ventilate and process what they experience. This is essential since exorcising a demoniac can be traumatic. I had to find someone to ventilate to and share my experiences when I was new and beginning in the ministry. Many times, it was my brother Joel or Jing, who is our office coordinator. One of the first priests who trained with us was Fr. Jojo Zerrudo of the Diocese of Cubao and I could tell when a particular exorcism session was a bit too much for his psyche; he would invite the team for dinner even if the session ends almost past midnight or he would decide to drive home anyone of the team members, even at late hours just so he could speak about what happened. I told Jing that this was normal, and that he merely wanted to ventilate, just like what I used to do when I was also beginning. Young exorcists should always have a venue with brother exorcists to ventilate, process, and learn from their experiences. I have learned early on that keeping all that negativity within oneself can lead to a negative and pessimistic view of life. I know because I fell into this kind of attitude myself and which even reached to the point of depression (thankfully, not the clinical type).

New exorcists are usually unnerved when they handle their first violent demoniac and whose demons harass the exorcist through different forms of psychic attacks. I call this experience the exorcist's Baptism of Fire. If they are able to spiritually and psychologically process this experience, they become veterans and the next cases will be less daunting. As the new exorcists grow in experience and in faith, especially when they experience continually the many miracles that the Lord is working through them, there comes a point wherein they graduate from being apprentice exorcists or exorcists-in-training to full-fledged exorcists. They are now able to handle cases on their own.

I decided to help and train exorcists because I have committed many mistakes when I was a beginner. I do not desire that new exorcists repeat my mistakes that sometimes led to many bad consequences. It was only by God's grace that he protected the cases I was handling during those times since these mistakes were not of the person's doing. These difficult experiences were a learning process for me and that is why I know the Lord allowed them to happen. I also

decided to train exorcists so that the many learnings I gathered throughout my years in the ministry as well as those of AMOE will not go to waste. New exorcists will not have to start from scratch like I did. But, of course, the need of the faithful for priests to assist in their diabolical difficulties is the primary reason I train and form exorcists. I see now clearly the reason why God has allowed me to experience many mistakes and difficulties during my younger years (of course, these were all mainly my fault): that others who would follow may be spared from experiencing and committing the same and would also begin their training from a higher level than from where I started.

New exorcists need to be guided in the discernment process in order to understand better what is going on, particularly when they handle more complex cases. They must develop seeing with the eyes of faith what the Lord is permitting so that they will be able to respond in accordance with God's will. Discernment is also crucial when they seek religious and lay volunteers to assist them; AMOE had a few sad experiences when volunteers were later discovered to have no calling to the ministry. They caused problems of division and intrigue within the team and cases were not handled with prudence, charity, and professionalism. The office had to ask them to leave. AMOE is now more careful; we discern carefully that volunteers must not only have the proper motivations but that it should be clear that the Lord is attracting and calling them to this ministry. We make sure that this call is centered on a real experience of God's love and that the desire to serve is focused on the desire to share this love to those in bondage to the devil. This is the reason why most of our volunteers were cases that AMOE successfully ministered to; they have experienced the reality of God's love for them and in gratitude to God, they desire to share it with others. Any community in this type of ministry must beware of "Trojan Horses": persons, whether intentional or not, whom the devil uses to infiltrate deliverance and exorcism ministries (ministries that directly attack him) to divide and destroy from within. This is a very real danger! Discern always.

Now, each exorcist-in-training is unique and must be mentored accordingly. This is what makes training long and challenging. Each has his own strengths and weaknesses, skills and dispositions or lack of them, moral and spiritual openings, experiences both good and bad, talents, charisms, virtues, specialties and learnings. What is important here is that the exorcist is humble and willing to learn. The exorcists who are the most vulnerable to deception and diabolical harassments are those who act as lone rangers; they are those with no support group and who think that just having the delegation from the bishop and the Roman Ritual are enough. They start from scratch and commit mistakes that could have been avoided. They take a long time resolving cases that could have been resolved more quickly and effectively. Exorcists have to work with one another so that they can learn more quickly, be less vulnerable to the deceptions of the evil one, and have a support system, especially during the more

challenging times in the ministry. Let us remember that one of the devil's tactic is to divide and conquer, to isolate then exterminate.

Another point is that a priest who believes that he is called to the ministry must truly discern in his heart if he is called, must check his motives (if they are pure, that is, based on love) since it is dangerous to enter the ministry without being called; one does not call oneself. I had a recent case of a priest who had to quit training because the harassments were so bad that he ended in the hospital with all the kinds of sicknesses that you could imagine.

The standard procedure that I try to use in the training and forming of new exorcists begins with talks, and then progresses to the priest being asked to be present in an exorcism session with a veteran exorcist. After some time, the new exorcist will be asked to preside over an exorcism session with a veteran exorcist present to assist him. Each stage is evaluated so that it is clear when the exorcist is now ready to move to the next level. The apprentice exorcist begins with handling cases dealing with persons and then he is trained to deal with cases of infestation. He would then accompany the team (AMOE) as we do an exorcism of a place like a school that has sought assistance from the office; the exorcist-in-training observes, learns, and participates. Regular colloquium is done with the new exorcist to check up on his spiritual life, experience in the ministry, and any harassments he may be experiencing which would point to openings in his life that must be dealt with. Those in training usually have to undergo the process of undergoing what a normal case would undergo (interviews, reviewing a checklist on openings, the doing of assignments, a pray over session, etc.) to make sure that the exorcist has no openings which the demons may use later to harass him; an added benefit is that he learns firsthand the process how each case is resolved.

The author with Fr. Winston in the regular radio program of AMOE at Radio Veritas. The show entitled *Kristo, Liwanag sa Dilim* airs every Saturday from 6-8 p.m.

Musings of a Dominican Exorcist of Two Years

The following reflection is by Fr. Winston Cabading, OP as he shares his insights as a young exorcist.

Whenever a difficult case is assigned to me, I would often jokingly tell Fr. Jocis and the team, "I did not sign up for this." And they would respond, "We, too." Then we would all laugh to our hearts' content. But honestly, as a young Dominican and later a priest, this part of the Dominican and priestly ministry was never discussed to us. In fact, even during our theological formation, no one among our professors presented this in the classroom nor in informal talks and discussions. Back then, I wanted to understand about the reality of evil spirits and how they affect us, and how the Catholic Church deals with cases involving them. Unfortunately, except for that small gesture of tracing on the forehead of a child to be baptized the sign of the cross in what seemed to be an exorcistic gesture, and the renunciation of the Devil and all his works prior to the profession of faith and reception of baptism, nothing else would be discussed about the devil and his legions. My theory then was either it was a topic not worth discussing or that no one among my illustrious professors really thought about it. How I wished really now, looking back, that our professors would have discussed this topic of angels and demons and freedom in Christ at great length, if not in dogma, at least in Christian Spirituality. Had we the appropriate background, perhaps our view of the priestly ministry would be a lot different, allowing more priests to help those who are being afflicted by the evil one.

Now, I just shake my head in disapproval, whenever I hear some of my brother priests' fearful view of the ministry of spiritual liberation and exorcisms. They have so many preconceptions and misconceptions often based on what they remember they saw in horror movies like *The Exorcist*. I would immediately say to them, "Why do you allow your faith to be shaped by Hollywood?" For indeed their fear of encountering the devil to the point of "Let us not discuss him or the ministry of spiritual liberation" undermine the very faith they profess, preach, and celebrate. How does one really understand the

meaning of Jesus' words, "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Mt 12:28), when the priests who preach the Gospel and who believe that their priesthood is an anointing from Christ to "proclaim the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15) fail to minister to people who come to them for spiritual solace because the evil one has taken hold of their life? I guess I would be accused of being overly simplistic, but I believe that if we had been properly taught angelology and demonology and the spiritual battle during our seminary years, things would have been different. And if we had talks from priests who are involved in the charismatic renewal wherein they share their thoughts, insights on the deliverance and spiritual healing ministry, our horizons may have been more open.

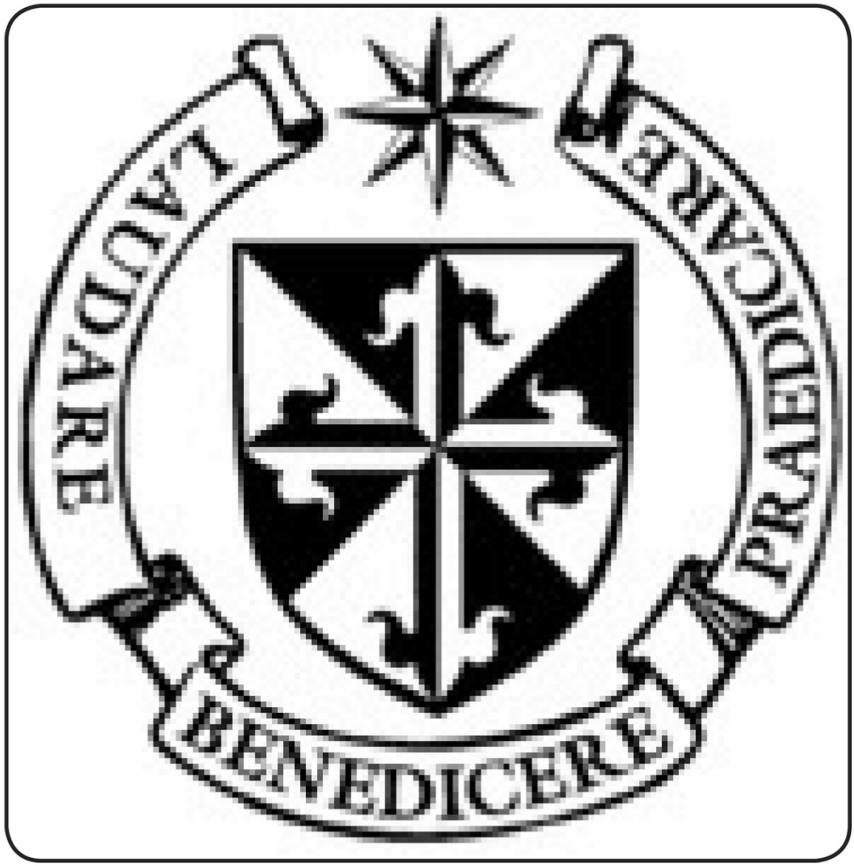
It is this reason that drove me to include it as part of the course in Creation and Christian Anthropology when it was offered to me to teach it in 2009 at the Faculty of Sacred Theology of the University of Santo Tomas and later at the Graduate School of Theology at the Immaculate Conception Major Seminary. The joy of teaching the subject lies in seeing my students intellectually transformed from fearful ones to interested students to enlightened ones. I have the happiness of seeing some of my students volunteer to assist me in the ministry whenever they are able. A Dominican student brother, in fact, because of his involvement with the ministry as a volunteer, decided to have for his licentiate in theology thesis topic "The Spirituality of the Exorcist."

However, I do understand the reluctance of many priests to be involved in the ministry of spiritual liberation and exorcism. If I had known from the very beginning exactly what the ministry would demand of me, I would probably have second thoughts on accepting it when Fr. Jocis Syquia came to my office one day to invite me to be part of their team. Had I known how much time and effort it would take to minister simply to one spiritually oppressed or possessed person, how in closing the spiritual openings of an afflicted person that allowed the evil one to have access to his life would also take me to discover and close my own openings, or how in encouraging a spiritually afflicted person to persevere in prayer and the practice of virtues, it would challenge me to do the same, or in telling the afflicted and their troubled families to have faith in God and hope in his mercy and love, I would be required to do the same in the face of the enemy, or that they need to have patience and trust in the Almighty even if they did everything asked of them yet healing seems to be not yet within sight, I would also need to do the same when after following all the prescribed prayers and going over them over the afflicted several times, nothing significant is happening, or that after being liberated they would need to be vigilant so that the evil one would not retaliate or return, I, too, need to be vigilant in my own life so that retaliations would have no effect on me and my loved ones, or that the afflicted would need to live in habitual sanctifying grace henceforth in order to prevent further attacks in the future, I, too, would need to strive to remain in the

grace of the Almighty so that his protection over me would remain, for it is his love alone that shields me from the perilous attacks of the enemy, I would probably have second thoughts on accepting the invitation to be an exorcist of the Archdiocese of Manila. It is much simpler if priestly life is about celebrating the holy sacraments, teaching in a classroom, administering in an office, preaching a retreat, directing a few souls. These are important and one can truly be holy by being faithful to these apostolic works. But involvement in the ministry of spiritual liberation and exorcism goes well beyond these.

Moreover, it is not about being passionate of anything one does nor of making it crusade-like. One cannot simply say that this is my apostolate or my ministry. Rather, it is allowing the Lord to really work beautifully and powerfully through this ministry, I who am the most unworthy of all priests, to save souls from the clutches of the noonday devil because this is one of the reasons that I was ordained and why I am a Dominican. As it is now with what the Lord taught me and shown me in this ministry for two years, I have embraced it as part of my being a son of St. Dominic, the Doctor of Truth and Preacher of Grace. St. Dominic de Guzman, my father in the Order of Preachers, when he saw the terrible effects of the Albigensian heresy over the Catholic populace of southern France and how the Devil who is the father of all heresies is sending many souls to perdition, he asked the Lord, "Lord, what would happen to the poor sinners?" Hence, he made it his life work to combat heresy with truth in charity through preaching and teaching. And when in the apostolic work of preaching or teaching he encountered the devil obstructing the preaching of the Truth, he had no fear in casting him out. In fact, he used such opportunities to show the Truth of the Catholic faith, much as the Lord Jesus showed his listeners that indeed he speaks the Truth by showing his power against the unclean spirits.

In fact, I have come to look into the Dominican Shield as representing the Order's readiness to do battle with the evil one and its minions. The clarity of the black and white speaks of the clearness of the Truth and the Catholic faith it proclaims. The shield itself is an instrument of defense against the assaults and attacks of falsehood that the devil throws relentlessly like arrows. The Truth of the cross is the ultimate weapon that vanquishes the enemy. To Praise God (*Laudare*) unites the Dominican to the ministry of the Holy Angels before the Most High, singing and glorifying his praises. To Bless (*Benedicere*) has a double action, one that faces the Almighty, blessing his Holy Name, and the other facing the people, blessing them in the name of him who has saved them from the evil one. To Preach (*Praedicare*) is the way by which the Order assaults the kingdom of lies, it proclaims Jesus and the Kingdom of God. And that star is the Son of God that shines and is never extinguished in the Order.



After two years in the ministry of spiritual liberation and exorcism, I have seen the reality of the evil one trying to frustrate any endeavor that would steal souls from him. However, it is indeed worthy of our human participation and effort to fight him, not through our human powers, but that of Christ through the Holy Spirit. I have witnessed the evil that the devil is able to do in the life of its victims. But I have seen the mercy, compassion, love, and power of the Most High who wills that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of his Son, Jesus Christ. I have ascertained and validated the teachings of the Catholic Church in her fight against the evil one. And I would say indeed without doubt: *Credo in unam, sanctam, catholicam, et apostolicam ecclesiam* (I believe in one. holy, catholic, and apostolic Church). This is indeed the Church founded on the rock of the faith of Peter in the Son of God, where the gates of hell shall not prevail.

There are fine prints indeed in being a Dominican and a priest. However, I have to say with St. James, "Blessed is the man who perseveres in temptation, for when he has been proved he will receive the crown of life that he promised to those who love him" (Jas 1:12). And again as St. Paul would eloquently say, *"What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the*

human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2:9).

The Spiritual Dimension: How the Devil Attacks

"We must watch over our mind, over our heart, and over our senses, for these are the gates by which the Devil penetrates"

—St. Jean Marie Vianney

The enemies of the soul

Once a person is born, he enters immediately into a spiritual war where his immortal soul is at stake. The moment he is baptized, the battle becomes even more intense against the forces of darkness since Jesus now lives within the soul of that person. Baptism is the foundation wherein God who is infinite uncreated Love draws the person to share in the glory and bliss emanating and shared by the Three Persons of the Trinity. This is an experience no mind can comprehend nor fathom this side of the earth.

The devil, due to his pride, is eternally cut off from this beatific privilege, hence his anger and envy at those who can still make that choice of responding to the invitation of Divine Love. A Catholic, therefore, becomes a prime target for the envious devil because with the fullness of truth and grace found within the Church instituted by the Lord, he has, while on this earth, the potential to reach heights of holiness and union with God that persons outside the Church cannot attain. Just a single Holy Communion, if the person has a perfect disposition, can make one a saint because one is receiving God himself in one's body and soul; all other spiritual activities even done again and again until the end of time cannot compare with even one Mass. The Holy Eucharist is truly an awesome Gift of God to the Catholic Church. Every Holy Communion received with the proper disposition gives inestimable glory to God and will allow the soul to share in God's glory in an inestimable manner also in the beatific vision in heaven.

Another reason why Baptism makes us prime targets of the devil is because he sees in the Catholic soul the living Triune God, his mortal enemy. He

therefore throws against the Catholic his most powerful demonic forces of deception and harassment, and uses his most cunning strategies against him. The devil sees in a Catholic the greatest threat to his kingdom. He knows that a Catholic has been given the fullness of the Truth and the full authority and spiritual power of Christ himself. If only we Catholics just knew who we really are in the eyes of God and the privileges and authority given to us, we would never fear anything in this world nor in the world of the spirits.

Now, the ordinary attacks of the devil are what we call temptations and this type of demonic attack has been discussed in a previous volume. The goal of the devil in tempting us is to make us fall into sin and therefore not merely destroy our soul but hurt our infinitely loving God. The Lord, on the other hand, allows us to be tempted because these are opportunities that make us practice good actions which grow into virtues so that the New Man in Christ would be fully formed in us.

"We are all tempted because the law of our spiritual life, our Christian life, is a struggle: a struggle" (Pope Francis).

"Satan wishes to destroy life lived in accordance with the truth, life in the fullness of good, the supernatural life of grace and love" (St. John Paul II).

Catholics "are the target of attacks by the devil because the spirit of Evil does not want our holiness, he does not want our Christian witness, he does not want us to be disciples of Christ" (Pope Francis).

Now the devil is an expert in making the concupiscence (fallen human nature) within us and the pleasures and "values" of the world outside of us meet so that they draw us away from fulfilling the will of God in our lives and following his commandments.

"The soul, by her very nature, always relishes good. Yet it is true that the soul, blinded by self-love, does not know and discern what is truly good and profitable to the soul and to the body. So the Devil, seeing them blinded by self-love, wickedly places before these souls diverse and various delights, colored so as to have the appearance of some benefit or good. He tempts each one, according to his condition, to those principal vices to which that soul seems to be most disposed" (Jesus to St. Catherine of Siena).

I have seen many times in my ministry how the devil can create seeming coincidences that make a person fall into his trap. For example, when a person decides to leave the occult, suddenly, all his occult and New Age acquaintances start calling him. Or when a person falls into the deceptions of an occult group, thinking it is a Catholic group, "signs" then start appearing all around him which seem to validate the group. It is also not rare to hear of freak accidents when

someone tries to seek assistance from the Church, after many years in the occult.

The devil does have a certain power to manipulate circumstances as we see in "St. Paul's declaration in 1 Thessalonians 2:18, that Satan twice hindered him from bringing consolation to the Thessalonians in their distress. In that case, Satan had arranged certain circumstances and situations, in which he worked."[7]

So from the above considerations, some reminders are necessary:

- A Catholic has to be watchful and always be discerning even when seeming amoral situations arise in his life; he must ask himself, "Where are these situations leading me?" "Could these circumstances and situations, without my being aware of it, be leading me away from God?"
- A Catholic has to continually check during prayer times and retreats that his values have not been contaminated by the flesh and the world; he must ask himself whether his priorities are still like that of the saints. In times of zeal, we may have offered God all that we are and made promises to him, but as time passes, we may unknowingly be taking back these promises we have made in certain areas of our life. Resolutions and commitments have to be renewed regularly because the world and the flesh have a way of altering them without us even being aware of it.
- A serious Catholic has to find his own personal means to weaken his concupiscence (flesh), as all the saints did, through certain mortifications, penances, sacrifices, and discipline; without these, it would be next to impossible to fulfill God's will because the flesh will always wage a powerful war against the Spirit. The Lord has clearly stated that we must first deny ourselves, that is the old man (flesh) in us, before we can follow him.

The Extraordinary Attacks of the Devil

Let us now expound on the different types of extraordinary demonic attacks: oppression, demonic obsession, possession, and infestation.

Oppression

Oppression includes burdens or afflictions that torment from the outside and which are wide ranging and diverse in nature. This is a lesser form of extraordinary demonic attack but, if not addressed, can lead to full possession. Oppression can affect one's health, emotional and psychological well-being, spiritual life, relationships, and work. These areas of one's life deteriorate for no apparent cause. With regard to physical and mental deterioration, that is primarily caused by an evil spirit, medical science would find difficulty in diagnosing the case, as well as finding a cure for the cause of the affliction.

There may or may not be paranormal occurrences experienced by those around the victim, but there would most likely be an occult connection.

Turning now to the different faculties of man, let us see how the devil harasses and attacks them, from the lowest faculties to the highest.

The five senses of man: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.

With regard to temptation, all the devil can do is to bring or use opportunities wherein a particular sense is brought in contact with its proper object, then the devil tempts the person with the help of concupiscence to satisfy that sense beyond what is right, or the object that is brought before the particular sense is designed to intentionally cause a craving again because of concupiscence that makes the person fall into sin. An example of the first situation is a person, who has eaten a complete meal and has had his fill, walks by a shop and sees his favorite dessert in the counter; although he is no longer hungry, he is tempted by the devil and orders the dessert and eats it just to satisfy his cravings. Here we see the person falling into the sin of gluttony. An example of the latter could be a person browsing through a rack of magazines for something to read to pass his time while he waits. As he turns around, he sees a magazine with suggestive almost pornographic pictures on the cover. He does not immediately turn away but listens to the temptations of the devil to continue looking, so much so that he ends up buying this particular magazine and eventually falls into the sin of lust.

Can the devil harass extraordinarily or attack more directly and intensely the faculties? As a rule, no, unless the person opens certain doorways, which we call openings, that allow the devil more power over them. We will discuss these doorways in another chapter but some examples of these doorways are frequenting occult practitioners, developing one's psychic abilities, practicing New Age activities, allowing unhealed traumas which cause deep hatred and unforgiveness in one's heart to remain, wearing lucky charms and objects on one's person or having them in one's house and a long-standing sinful lifestyle.

Once these doorways are opened wider, the person will then be vulnerable to what we call demonic oppression. Below are some examples of oppressions from the different senses.

The Senses

Eyes—the person sees frightening apparitions, especially at night, or when he looks at an ordinary picture, he sees diabolical superimpositions like smiling demonic faces.

Ears—the person starts to hear voices that tempt him to commit suicide or harm others; he may hear these voices taunting him and telling him how worthless a person he is or that he will never be forgiven by God for his sins. He may also

hear mocking voices filled with blasphemy.

Touch—the person wakes up with bruises on his body or suddenly feels pains which have no physical cause like, for example, pinpricks during certain moments of the day. At night, the person experiences sexual harassments, or during the day he may feel internal movements like small snakes slithering across his skin.

Smell—the person smells foul odors like sulfur or feces.

Taste—the person finds that his favorite dish has become unpalatable to his taste buds; it either tastes so bland or extremely disagreeable. Or suddenly the person has a craving for food that is half-cooked and bloody, and that his desire for any other types of food is gone (we see this with persons who delve into witchcraft and Satanism).

I have encountered in my ministry almost all of these types of oppression. If, from the diagnosis and discernment, it is found that the cause was demonic and the person now fully cooperates with the spiritual process, the healing and liberation from these types of oppression is not hard to achieve.

The Emotions

The devil knows that due to our fallen nature (concupiscence), we are particularly vulnerable with regard to this faculty. In temptation, he can arrange circumstances wherein the emotions are agitated and aroused so that man is tempted to act against his better judgment. I know of cases in our office wherein the person seeking to follow the Lord more faithfully is suddenly bombarded with negativity from the people around him: from people coming from his own home, to his co-workers in the workplace. This is a reality I have seen: the devil can influence those around us to emotionally harass us when he sees that we are seriously striving to become holy. Of course, this means that the people he uses are used to certain weaknesses which he has taken advantage of and usually these people are unaware that they are being used this way by the evil one to harass others.

"The demons either tempt us themselves or incite against us people who have no fear of God" (St. Maximus the Confessor).

So when a person opens certain doorways in his life, the attacks of the devil can move from the ordinary attack of temptation to the extraordinary form of attack which is oppression. And the more doorways are opened or are opened wider, the greater power the devil has of oppressing the person. He begins to have a more direct control over the emotions and he can make a person feel

certain negative emotions even without any triggering event on the part of the person. He can also easily cause a person to shift from one emotion to another which we see in emotional mood swings. Based on the many cases in the office, we can conclude that the devil has power over anything that is material and he is able to manipulate the chemicals in the body to produce a certain emotional reaction. The three negative emotions that are usually encountered with the oppressed as well as the possessed are deep sadness or depression, intense anger or hatred, and fear and agitation. I have seen many manifestations of these. For instance, during interviews, an oppressed or a possessed person suddenly feels like strangling or hurting me for no reason at all. When I schedule persons for a session of prayers, they come usually high in spirits, but upon entering the office, they experience palpitations and fear. Or right before the session of prayers, they suddenly feel a profound sadness which leaves them perplexed. There are times that during the prayers, the person has to struggle with an urge to hit the exorcist.

The devil can make the person experience what he himself is experiencing: from that of hatred and fear when confronted with a minister of the Lord, to sadness because he is about to be expelled. I remember a story I read about a former Satanist who, before his conversion, could detect from ten hosts before him which was the consecrated one. He could identify the consecrated one because of the intense hatred he would feel when the consecrated host was placed before him. During the diagnosis and discernment, we should therefore continually check the state of the emotions of the client during the interviews and prayer sessions. Mood changes of anger, fear, and sadness with no apparent cause would point to a demonic cause. A last point I would like to emphasize is that persons with a lot of occult contamination in the past and who are now about to make a religious vow or consecration (profession) may experience this type of mood swing oppression a month to a week before they make their vows. Proper intervention will be needed or else the person may be led to think that he or she has no vocation.

The Imagination

There may be times that, while praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament, a sacrilegious or immodest image suddenly pops up in your imagination. If these things are farthest in your mind, the cause may in all probability be demonic since the devil has greater power to harass the lower or material faculties of man. Now, this is just a temptation and so one must just calmly return to one's prayer. We should not berate ourselves about how we could possibly imagine such things and feel what a bad person one is. This is a tactic of the devil; he places images in our imagination to make us believe that we caused it and therefore we end up blaming and getting angry at ourselves. Know where the image has come from, refocus, and be at peace.

As was stated, if a person has opened the doorways to the spirit world, these attacks will be frequent and severe.

Oppressive attacks on the imagination can be sexual and blasphemous images just popping into one's imagination. Demonic images and superimpositions, that is, the person may see imprinted demonic images when looking at a neutral object like a tree, are other examples. Oppressive attacks on the imagination can happen when one is asleep wherein the person experiences nightmares and his dreams tend to have the common themes of the demonic, blood and violence, including end-of-the-world scenarios.

The Memory

When there are obsessive remembrances of past hurts and objects of trauma that depress the person and keep him stuck from moving on, then these are manifestations of oppression targeting the memories. It keeps the person in a continual state of anger and unforgiveness towards whoever caused the pain. It must be kept in mind that hatred and unforgiveness are two of the most powerful forces that keep demons attached to a person. Exorcists in Rome reiterated a number of times and in my own experience saw the impossibility of expelling the devil from a person with an unforgiving heart.

"For nothing is so loved of the devil as to find a person who has not forgiven another" (St. Theodore the Studite).

"The way to overcome the devil when he excites feelings of hatred for those who injure us is immediately to pray for their conversion" (St. Jean Marie Vianney).

One of my professors in Rome stated that the devil is able to draw out memories from our memory. How does the devil draw out the hurts from our memory? I am of the opinion that since our brain has certain centers where memories are stored and which when stimulated can bring them into consciousness, the devil with his perfect knowledge of human physiology and power over material objects knows how to trigger the particular centers where these painful memories are stored. It is therefore important that in addition to praying the prayers for protection against demonic attacks to our different faculties, we should also process our hurts in life and allow the healing of the Lord to strengthen us as well as to forgive from the heart those who have caused us pain.

The last two faculties which will be discussed are the highest faculties of man since they are purely spiritual faculties.

The spiritual faculties of man are what make him a creature created in God's image. No other creature on this earth has an intellect and a free will. These two spiritual faculties are what make man immortal unlike all other living creatures

on this earth where death ends their existence. Since these faculties of man are purely spiritual and not rooted in matter unlike the lower faculties discussed earlier, the devil has no power over them; he attacks them indirectly.

Only God knows what is in the mind of man; the devil can never read what is in the heart or in the depths of man's soul. Even our guardian angels, by their own power, cannot know what we are thinking unless God reveals it to them. They can only know what is in our mind when we direct our thoughts to them in prayer. Angels communicate among themselves through their thoughts since they do not have the lower faculties of the senses. In interviewing a potential case, an exorcist can test whether a person is possessed by directing his thoughts of command to a client and if the person reacts negatively to this silent command, then this is a confirmation that there is a demonic entity within the person. But, of course, if the person does not react, this does not also mean that there are no demons present; other means are available to the exorcist to discern accurately.

As we are guided by God through good thoughts or inspirations, the devil can tempt us through thoughts that tempt us to sin. This is ordinary temptation. It is therefore important to watch our thoughts and guard our hearts always.

"We must strive with all our strength to repel the enemy of our souls, with full attention and vigilance, as he rages and aims his darts against every part of us that can be assaulted and wounded" (St. Cyprian).

When a person allows the devil to gain more power to attack his intellect through the "openings" that the attack becomes extraordinary, the following may happen: the person suddenly starts to have doubts regarding his faith, he begins to have a lot of distracting and disturbing thoughts, or his mind may suddenly become paranoid. Although the devil, as was mentioned, has no power to know what is in the mind of man, he can harass it with disturbing and malicious thoughts. So, if a person opens the doorway wider or more and more doorways to the devil are opened, the psychic attacks on the mind also intensify proportionately not only in quantity but also in quality.

The Will

Man's other spiritual faculty is his will. The devil has no power over man's will; he cannot force a person to do what the person chooses not to do. When a person is therefore possessed by demons, the demons merely possess the body (the material aspect of the person) and not the soul which, of course, includes the intellect and the will. In a possessed state, the person's consciousness is not present; he is, in a sense, placed into a trance state. For us to sin, the devil can only attack the will indirectly through attacking the lower faculties like the emotions, imagination, and the like.

The devil can extraordinarily attack a person by assaulting his different faculties at the same time. For example, he can cause dryness in prayer and spiritual desolation as well as heaviness in the body so that the person is not able to pray well. He can cause insomnia and uneasy sleep as well as emotional desolation so that the person always feels drained out.

There are other types of oppression. He can oppress through the health of a person so that the person's health deteriorates for no apparent reason. There were cases wherein the doctors could not diagnose an illness, but after asking for prayers, a diagnosis was suddenly made. I have witnessed oppression that caused erratic blood pressure and difficulty in breathing. The devil can also oppress by causing freak accidents although they do not cause any permanent damage to the person. God does not allow the devil to go beyond certain boundaries, as we read in the Book of Job. I have my own experiences and have also heard of stories of car accidents or near accidents when a spiritual intervention was being planned. I had cases wherein through curses, relationships were destroyed and I have seen how, through oppression, religious communities became divided. Demonic oppression can also cause a sudden drop in one's business.

It is a reality that the devil can oppress us in many ways, hence we must learn the ways of spiritual warfare. Not only must we be careful and watchful so that we do not open doorways to the demonic which give him more power over us but we must also be aware when he tempts and harasses us, so that we are able to respond properly; thus we make use of these opportunities to grow in sanctity and to glorify God with Jesus when he triumphed over the devil for the sake of our souls.

The gravest form of extraordinary demonic attack is what we call possession. A brief description of it is in order.

Possession

Possession is a state wherein demons take full control of the body (not the soul) of a person; they speak and act without the consent of the person and the person later has no knowledge of what transpired while he was under their control. This is the greatest form of extraordinary demonic attack wherein the demons act from within the person. The manifestations of possession can range from an immobile catatonic trance state to a full-fledged physically violent display of hatred and pride.

St. John Paul II, in his discourse at the general audience of August 13, 1986, stated: "As the result of the sin of our first parents, this fallen angel has acquired dominion over man to a certain extent. This is the doctrine that has been constantly professed and proclaimed by the Church, and which the Council of Trent confirmed in its treatise on original sin" (cf. DS, 1511). "According to Sacred Scripture, and especially the New Testament, the dominion and the

influence of Satan and of the other evil spirits embraces all the world… It is possible that in certain cases the evil spirit goes so far as to exercise his influence not only on material things, but even on man's body, so that one can speak of 'diabolical possession' (cf. Mk. 5:2-9). … In principle it cannot be denied that Satan can go to this extreme manifestation of his superiority in his will to harm and to lead to evil."

"We must add that the impressive words of the Apostle John—'The whole world lies under the power of the evil one' (1 Jn. 5:19)—allude also to the presence of Satan in the history of humanity, a presence which becomes all the more acute when man and society depart from God."

The following are a number of symptoms of a demoniac when he is in a state of crisis (which later he has no knowledge of):

— Convulsions
— Frothing or foaming in the mouth
— Rigidity of the limbs
— Falling into a cataleptic state or trance
— Preternatural strength inconsistent with one's age or physical appearance
— Levitation or excessive weight, making the body impossible to lift
— Swelling of the throat, face, tongue, or stomach, and the bulging of the eyes
— Blasphemy, obscenities, and curses against the sacred
— A negative reaction manifesting aversion to sacred objects and gestures even when the demoniac's eyes are closed
— Immoral gestures and actions rejecting Christian morality and piety
— Ability to speak in languages previously unknown to the demoniac and to understand questions put to him/her in those tongues
— Turning one's head to face the rear or to have it twisted almost around
— Clairvoyance or the power to perceive matters beyond the range of the senses
— Knowledge of the secrets of others and the location of hidden objects
— Changes in skin color (gray or pale)
— Mockery
— Voice becomes deeper than the normal voice of the afflicted. The possessed speaks from his/her belly or from very deep in his/her throat. Sometimes the lips will not even move. The voice is more like that of an animal.
— Flexibility and contortions like arching of the back
— Coughing, screaming, yawning, burping, retching, and vomiting (even if the person has just eaten, what is expelled is only white foamy saliva)
— Actions from the demoniac that try to harm himself like self-strangulation
— Common words that come out of the mouth of the demoniac like, "We will never leave!" and "She is ours!"

Here are a number of symptoms that a person feels before he enters into a crisis state (the person feels these harassments since he has not yet entered into a

full crisis state). These occurrences may also happen when the person is merely being interviewed:

— Physical pain such as pinpricks
— Headaches, stomachaches, and nausea
— The sensation of ants or small snakes crawling under the skin
— Pains and heaviness in the lower back, spine and shoulders
— Vomiting of alien objects: pins and needles as well as nails, glass, blood, pottery, feathers, coins, hair, thread, etc.
— Loss of bodily functions like temporary loss of sight, hearing, and speech
— Hearing voices that distract as well as mock and ridicule the exorcist or what is about to occur
— Emotional mood swings of anger, fear, and sadness

Infestation

When extraordinary demonic activity is centered on an animal, thing, or place, we call this infestation. There is a strong probability of infestation in a place (whether home, school, parish, hospital, etc.) if the following occurrences are present (when more of each of these events are present, the greater is the probability and depth of the demonic bondage on the place):

— When there are a lot of sightings of non-material entities seen by different persons (especially those with psychic abilities)
— When extraordinary demonic attacks of possession, oppression, and obsession occur frequently in the place
— When there seems to be some form of blockage to God's blessings, protection, and graces in the place
— When different types of paranormal and psychic phenomena frequently occur like objects moving on their own, appliances turning on by themselves, footsteps and voices with no one around, and the like
— When a lot of sufferings, sicknesses, and traumas occur in the place
— When temptations that are very strong and persistent are experienced within the place
— When there seems to be some form of block to the development of the spiritual life of the persons residing there as well as obstinacy in certain vices and addictions
— With regard to endeavors and programs which are spiritual in nature, there seems to be non-commensurate results to the time and energy expended
— When there are a lot of persons experiencing the negative emotions of anger, sadness, and fear in the place
— When the place is known for its series of freak accidents and "bad luck"

The following account is from the life of St. Francis of Assisi[8]; it clearly manifests the power that evil spirits can have over a certain locality.

Satan takes perverse pleasure in inciting people against one another and causing dissensions and divisions. St. Bonaventure told how one day St. Francis went to the city of Arezzo. It had long been subject to civil factions and was close to destroying itself. Francis could see the demons dancing joyfully on the walls of the city, fueling a flame of hatred in the hearts of the people against one another.

So Francis called Brother Sylvester, a man of dove-like simplicity, and commanded him: "Go to the gate of the city. There, in the name of Almighty God, command the demons, in virtue of holy obedience, to leave immediately."

Sylvester hurried to obey and cried out in a loud voice, "All you evil spirits gathered together in this place, I command you, in the name of Almighty God and of His servant Francis, get out of here!"

No sooner had he uttered these words than the quarreling voices were stilled, the people's angry passions were calmed, brother ceased to fight against brother, and peace was restored to the city. The pride and jealousy of the demonic spirits had threatened to ruin the city, but the wisdom of humble Francis saved it from destruction.

Before we move on, we propose a question. "Why is it that when sin abounds in a society, there seems to be a corresponding increase of wars, epidemics, disasters, and calamities?" We have reason to believe that it is because evil spirits who have power over matter gain more freedom to act on man and nature when society chooses to continually remove the protection of God through sin. But, of course, the demons will always be hindered by the limits that are set by Divine Providence.

As the author Heinrich Schlier, a professor of Ancient Christian Literature and New Testament Exegesis in the University of Bonn, also concludes and states, "Christ has left the devil only whatever power unbelief allows him."[9] And he adds further on, "Step by step new destruction is wrought upon the conditions of life, and cruel havoc is worked upon the earth and among its inhabitants by the released demoniacal powers."[10] Part of the nature of the demons is "to influence nature so as to enhance their claims and authority over man."[11] "He takes possession of all levels of natural everyday life; he attacks it at every possible level, in the soul and body of the individual or in what we call natural phenomena."[12]

Demonic Obsession

Demonic obsession includes compulsions that affect the imagination and the mind which are blasphemous, sacrilegious, malicious, and suicidal in nature.

Also included here is the compulsive nature of habitual sin. This type of extraordinary demonic attack when compared with possession and demonic oppression is seen to be the least grave form of demonic harassment. Some authors do not include this type of attack when discussing extraordinary attacks of the devil. I came across this label in the older books on Exorcism and have decided to retain it as a designation of a particular type of extraordinary attack. I believe the reason why the term is not now commonly used by modern exorcists is that its characteristics have a similarity with those found in oppression and can therefore be included under it.

Testimony

The following reflections are from Sr. Mary Bernard Tescam, OCD. Especially during the years that she was superior of her Carmelite contemplative community, she assisted AMOE by personally journeying as well as praying over some of our cases experiencing lesser forms of extraordinary demonic attacks.

Since man's life on earth is a time of trial (cf. Job 7:1) and all who would live devotedly in Christ must undergo persecution (cf. 2 Ti 3:12) and the devil your foe is on the prowl like a roaring lion looking for prey to devour (cf. 1 Pt 5:8); you must use every care to clothe yourselves in God's armor so that you may be ready to withstand the enemy's ambush (cf. Eph 6:11).

—From the Holy Rule, Discalced Carmelites

Dear Rev. Father Jocis,

Thank you for sharing with us the principles of spiritual warfare, the theological and practical aspects that truly helped us to better live our Carmelite contemplative life.

This knowledge illumined a dark, often ignored part of our prayer life which is the confrontation of an obstacle: the evil force constantly at work in our midst. In the Precautions, of our holy father, St. John of the Cross writes,

> It should be noted… that all the harm the soul receives is born of its enemies… the world, the devil, and the flesh. The world is the enemy least difficult to conquer; the devil is the hardest to understand; but the flesh is the most tenacious, and its attacks continue as long as the old self lasts.

In our humble experience, the cloistered Carmelite contemplative life is looked up to by the ordinary layman but it is lived by very human individuals like us, weak, prone to temptations although called to a different role which is the exclusive consecration to God through prayer and self-immolation. The intensity of this life "behind walls" also inadvertently invites intense forces of

evil to topple down the fervor of our commitment, to lose our focus on God through petty squabbles, and divert our direction towards more rewarding external activities. The life of prayer is dealing with emptiness, self-knowledge, and mundane daily routine. It is a lifetime of purgation that promises the Bridegroom's ultimate state of perfection insofar as is possible even in this life. With this as the goal, I personally have witnessed the way dark forces operate—subtly they ride on the natural psychological, even genetic weaknesses, to the point that they control the person almost always without the person being aware of it.

As an example, we are acquainted with some persons who may have the natural weakness of being given to anger. At some unguarded moment, the person can be so vulnerable, especially when physically indisposed by sickness or fatigue, or there is a habitual neglect of the practice of the virtues. At a given stimulant that triggers this irritability, the anger-reaction is over and above the stimulant. When this overreaction happens, the results are disastrous: the person herself realizes and reflects, "*Paano ko nagawa yun? Paano ko nasabi yun, ayaw ko namang sabihin yun…*" ("How did I do that? How come I was able to utter those words, I would never have said them at all!"). The most revealing comments may come from those around them: "*Parang di na ikaw yun…*" ("You looked as if it wasn't you doing those things…") There could really be truth there: she is not herself because her weakness has been intensified by forces other than herself. Usually, when evil takes over the weakness of anger, there is the presence of malice and deep resentment resulting in unforgiveness.

After we learned of the inner dynamics of spiritual warfare you shared with us, we have become more aware of our defects: actually our "dominant passions" so to say. Now we are more guarded not to fall into the common traps of pettiness. There is a reason to be hopeful when in the midst of heated disputes or arguments, I can already hear the novices saying to one another, "*Hoy*, let us stop *na*. *Huwag na tayong mag-away, baka sakyan pa yan ng 'isa' lalong lumala.*" ("Hey, let us stop this. Let us not fight anymore, the 'other one' might ride on our disputes."). Before knowing the dynamics of the warfare, there were just long, endless arguments, blaming, griping with self-righteous attitudes pervading, and giving way to long-term misunderstandings. (If not addressed properly, it could become a cause for divisions in a community which is already one of the clear signs of the diabolical presence.)

The realization that there is a lethal force present that can really destroy a community if we allow ourselves to give way to our anger, gossiping, or childish bickering—this deters us from allowing narcissistic and egocentric tendencies to get hold of us. It also makes faith stronger and makes us aware of our harmful imperfections. One of the images that St. Teresa uses for contemplatives is that they are the "standard bearers" (or flag carriers) in the battlefield. If the standard bearer is attacked and loses his grip of the flag, the battle is lost. This is why we need to be vigilant; we cannot afford to be

distracted and careless.

The awareness of combat in the spiritual life also invited us to practice the virtue of humility in all levels—which is something really obnoxious to the evil one. One of the practical applications regarding this is to be candid and "open" to the superior or formator, to acknowledge one's strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes this is difficult to the self-conscious ones who are egocentric and fearful of being misjudged or be subject to prejudices.

One of the good effects of this openness, however, is that it has saved us from many pitfalls we are unaware of. Since one or two of us have "sense-sitive" natures, they are candid in their sharing of their perceptions to the prioress. In this way they get "spiritually educated." They help in getting rid of "useless hindrances" in the monastery. Our building structure was built almost 90 years ago. There are nooks and corners that are "not healthy." The ministry has taught us that evil "likes dark and filthy places." Since then, we have tried to pay attention to these areas, putting order and cleaning up bodegas, installing lights in places not frequented by the nuns.

The awareness, too, of not having "openings" where the evil one may enter into our religious life guards us from being attacked. The usual "opening" for us in the religious life is no longer the presence of mortal sin, since as much as possible we are supposed to avoid that… the usual "openings" where the evil one can enter into our lives are habitual neglect of regular observance (spiritual reading, community acts like meditation, mental prayer, recreation) and, most of all, self-indulgence. The human will is blind; it will always assert what it naturally wants. When the intellect is not enlightened or disciplined, it will find ways to get what it wants to indulge in. Inordinate attachments in food, clothing, friendships, and personal things will lead to big imperfections: these in turn can loosen the spiritual life into carelessness and sloth. Then this person becomes an instrument of trouble for the others.

Another help that you taught us is to watch out for "patterns" or repetitious events and look out for cause and effects. We observed that when we are "low" in spirits, physically very tired or having heavy trials, the evil one attacks more often. We noticed this specially with our formants, like the postulants or novices. They often get assailed during periods of discernment with strong temptations before landmark events in their lives like the taking of the habit, pronouncing their temporary or perpetual vows. Actually, it was a novice who strongly recommended that we ask for help from you and your ministry. It was occasioned by her own experience: a different kind of "source" that caused one of her trials. She felt that it was something out of the ordinary. As she was herself a psychiatrist, we trusted her sincerity when she said, "Mother, I know the difference between a psychological or natural cause and I know this is not usual; we need extra help." Her experience was that in the middle of one night, in her cell she saw a large black bird trying to enter through her window; half-asleep, she felt she tried to close the window but fell from her own bed.

Ironically, one of the ministry-members mentioned later that this similar occurrence was also being experienced by another novice but from another cloistered congregation.

At this point, it would be good to have an example. I had a novice who was doing very well but one day I noticed that her attitude towards me was starting to be "funny." She had complaints like, "Mother, you always snob me"; "In our classes when you are doing lectures, you do not want to make eye contact with me"; "During recreations, you do not ever want to sit beside me or when you are in conversation with others, you never address me directly or look in my direction." I found these observations preposterous because her accusations were the farthest from my mind. In short, I thought she was one person who had psychological problems and was getting attached to me. In the next formation visits, I ironed it out with her, although the complaints still continued and she was not satisfied with answers. Then a family problem crept up and she said that it would help if I could share with her the Deliverance Prayer from the AMOE so she can also pray for her family. I told her, however, that since she was a novice, she must read the contents first and refrain from praying it. A few months after, she was admitted to simple vows (temporary vows) and as I congratulated her glowing face, I asked amusedly, "Oh, so you have overcome all your many complaints?" Then she shared what really happened to her, "Mother, it was the devil!" That remark was even more amusing for me, knowing her to be a bit intellectually sophisticated, with an avant-garde background (Maryknoll graduate, once a manager of a luxury-retail group of stores) so I asked how she would explain that.

She said that as agreed, when I gave her the Deliverance Prayer, she DID NOT PRAY IT, she READ IT. And after just reading it, she felt a real pure peace enveloped her, all her fears and doubts seemed to dissolve, and there was a realization that she had been acted upon by an external force that made very strong suggestions of malicious thoughts into her brain. "Mother, that prayer-text is truly very powerful!"

You taught us also how to use the weapons for spiritual combat. I find it really timely that this brings me to reflection over one part of our Holy Rule. The imagery is medieval (our Rule was written in 1214) but the text is spiritual warfare at its best for all time:

> Your loins are to be girt (cf. Eph. 6, 14) with chastity, and your breast fortified by holy meditations, for, as Scripture has it: "Holy meditation will save you" (cf. Prov. 2, 11). Put on holiness as your breastplate (cf. Eph. 6, 14) and it will enable you to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength (cf. Deut. 6, 5) and your neighbor as yourself (cf. Mt. 19, 19; 22, 37-39).
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> Faith must be your shield on all occasions, and with it you will be able to quench all the flaming missiles of the wicked one (cf. Eph. 6, 16): there can

be no pleasing God without faith (cf. Hebr. 11, 6). On your head set the helmet of salvation (cf. Eph. 6, 17) and so be sure of deliverance by our only Savior, sets his own free from their sins (cf. Mt. 1, 21). The sword of the Spirit, the word of God (cf. Eph. 6, 17) must abound (cf. Col. 3, 17; 1 Cor. 10, 31).

You must give yourself to work of some kind, so that the devil may always find you busy; no idleness on your part must give him a chance to pierce the defenses of your souls.

Our youngest novice felt something unusual with her face, about the beginning of this year. She was feeling numb on one part of the left side of her cheek, her mouth and her eyes. She felt that her smile was getting lopsided, she could not swallow well. As she was a nurse by profession, she tried to remedy this on her own at first by prayer and by whatever means she could find; at hand was the exorcised oil in her cell. Before sleeping, she would apply a bit of oil on the area of numbness and during the day she inserted a relic of Pope John Paul II on her left cheek inside her toque. After about four days, she finally reported to the Prioress that she had signs of Bell's palsy. Immediately, we consulted a neurologist—and she was right. It was Bell's palsy. But the doctor was simply amazed that the disease has not progressed as it should have; she said that at the first symptoms, the patient should have been treated within 24 hours, otherwise the disease would have advanced quite rapidly so that it would mean one-month of medication and a lifetime of threat to recurrence or paralysis for life. The disease occurs one in ten thousand! She was given medication for five days and after three days she was free of the symptoms.

What can one say about this? Acts of faith in the ministry of the Church, the mercy of God towards our human need for something to "cling to," the sacramental which the Church endorses: these played an important role, I think, in the healing of the novice.

The ministry has taught us never to be afraid of the evil one. True to form, real contemplatives and all the saints were never afraid of them. St. Teresa, the Little Thérèse, St. John of the Cross, and Blessed Mary of Jesus Crucified all had experiences of diabolical attacks, harassments, and oppressions in their lives. The biography of our Father St. John of the Cross is interspersed with many anecdotes although he himself never mentioned them. My favorite is this: One night as he entered his cell, after a hard day's work, he found the devil lying on his bed. The saint said to him, "I am tired so if you can move over to one side, I will take the other side."

Nevertheless, the power against evil that the saints have, derived from faith in our Lord's triumph over death and in his glorious resurrection is not a thing they flaunt or brag about. In fact, an anecdote from the Desert Fathers' literature illustrates how they deal with this:

A holy and wise desert father had a novice living with him. In that area there

were frequent oppressions caused by the devil which rendered the whole population quite fearful of the attacks. One day, the novice and the holy monk saw a demon coming to attack the population again. The novice ran away, and the monk ran with him. Later, the novice asked, “Holy Father, you are also afraid of the devil?” The old monk said, “No, my son, I am not afraid of the devil but I am more afraid of vainglory.”

By this lowly contribution, I just wish to thank you and commend the work of the ministry. I praise and thank God for the grace of making the initial effort of the Archdiocese of Manila to establish the AMOE. May the light of Christ drive away the darkness in our midst! May God reward you for taking on this important work. We humbly assure you of our prayers and sacrifices for the good of the Church and the salvation of souls.

Sincerely in Christ,
Sr. Mary Bernard Tescam, OCD

Openings Part I

"The devil is like a mad dog tied to a chain. Beyond the limit of the chain the dog cannot go, so you should stay far from where the chain reaches or you will be hurt."

—St. Padre Pio

In our office, we have encountered so many cases that certain patterns have emerged on how a person becomes vulnerable to extraordinary demonic attack. It is important to learn what these openings are so that one is constantly aware of them and so that the devil, through deception, may not fool us into thinking that delving into them is harmless or that they are of no consequence, like when the devil told Eve the lie, "You shall not die," with regard to eating the fruit in the garden. We must not let our guard down because some of these openings may even seem very beneficial to man (only in the material sense). Of course, the devil will always tempt us by presenting something harmful (especially to the soul) as something good; no one will be tempted and attracted to something manifestly evil and harmful.

Man can be deceived since we have the tendency to assume that just because we received something good (these benefits will always have to do with our physical lives and material needs), automatically it is from the Lord. We therefore see some Catholics thinking that there is nothing wrong with receiving healing from a faith healer or good luck charm from a talisman given by a witch doctor. We tend to be ignorant of its effects, especially to our immortal soul.

God who is infinite Love created us out of love and will always provide for us; he desires us to be with him in heaven and will always give us any spiritual gift that we ask from him. With regard to material needs, he will sometimes delay or maybe not give us what we ask him when he sees that our souls would end up separated from him because of what we desire. But he will always provide us with whatever is necessary to live fulfilled in this world. The devil, on the other hand, can manipulate circumstances and matter to a degree and hence give some form of material benefit to those who follow him or those who fall for his deceptions as long as this will ultimately become a hindrance to their

relationship with God and allow him more power and authority in their lives. It must be remembered that if a person receives something from the kingdom of the evil one, a sort of right is given to the devil over the person and this right gives him more power to influence that person.

Regarding the concept of rights connected especially with occult involvement, I quote from the author, Adam Blai, an expert on religious demonology and exorcism in the United States as well as an auxiliary member of the International Association of Exorcists, in his work, *Possession, Exorcism, and Hauntings*.

> Demons claim rights to act based on the free-will choices of the people with authority over what they want. This is usually the owner of a building or body they wish to afflict or inhabit, but sometimes is an ancestor. God does not wish the demons to afflict humans, but his perfect justice allows it up to a point. He generally allows people to burn their hand on the stove when that is the only thing that will get through to them. He allows short-term corrective pain because He will not violate our free will and force us to turn away from the demons. He hopes that when people experience the truth of a relationship with Satan, they will come back to His loving arms.13
>
> Early on the demon often pretends to be helpful or be the person's friend. When they have enough rights to be confident that the person can't cast them away on their own, they start to turn mean and controlling. Later when their rights are extensive, they may torture the person so severely that the person agrees to give over use of their body in exchange for the torture to stop. It is like being conned into a relationship with a charismatic cult leader: they shower people with love and affirmation, demand that they renounce their liberties and property, and then in the later stages dominate their lives completely."14
>
> Given their need to get the free-will permission for each step of the process, the demon must play this game with the person, tailored specifically to that person's needs and weaknesses. In the beginning, they may feign weakness and neediness, or pretend that the person has power over them. In other cases, they may offer power or some form of short-term success. Sometimes they offer what seems to be psychic information about the future, or to support an occult business. When people are abused or neglected as children, the demons may offer companionship or the power of protection, which the person may grow to rely on over the years.15

This question of rights is essential in understanding why it may take longer than necessary to dislodge demons from a person. If a person has not been prepared well before an exorcism, that is, he has not sincerely renounced whatever rights he has given to the demons, then the session will tend to be very violent with the victim suffering a lot, and if ever he is liberated, it would merely be temporary. In Rome, it was made clear to us who were attending the classes

on exorcism that one may not exorcise a person without his consent. If a person is brought to me already in a crisis state, then I would exorcise the person; but afterwards, when the person regains consciousness, I must do a detailed interview and give assignments that would break any rights that demons have over the person. This is important, otherwise the liberation would merely be temporary. But if a possessed person is brought to me but is not yet in the crisis state, I would first make sure that he fulfills the assignments that will break the rights of any demons over him before I start the exorcism.

Occultism

Returning to the openings that we create, the great majority of those who fall victim to extraordinary demonic activity do so due to occult involvement. From January to June of the year 2015, 94% of our cases had dealings with the occult. I would define occultism as the theory and practice of invoking superhuman or preternatural powers, not supernatural or divine powers, in order to obtain results that are beyond the capacity of mere human nature. In this volume, although trying to obtain some form of "secret" knowledge from the preternatural world is termed esotericism, I would include it under the umbrella of occultism for the sake of simplicity. As an aside, the knowledge found in esoteric books which comes mainly from communications with the preternatural world to occult psychics (while usually in a trance state) can be one of the following: that we have alien roots (for example, scientology), reincarnation, that there are certain secrets of the universe that only those evolved can learn, that we are gods, that everything is god (pantheism), the oneness of the universe, and the like.

Occultism is very dangerous since it is centered basically on the search for security, assurance, and benefits outside of Jesus.

Occultism in our country is seen first and foremost in our continuing pagan and animist beliefs and practices (superstition). When there is a contamination of our Catholic faith with paganism or animism, we use the term syncretism. We find among Catholics a lot of occult beliefs and practices that have come down from our pagan ancestors. Some are easily seen such as the wearing of amulets and talismans and some are harder to spot since they have merged with Catholic rites and rituals. For instance, many Filipinos offer blood sacrifices to the elemental spirits in a particular location before constructing a house or building. A blood sacrifice is worship and the elemental spirits are not souls, angels, or saints but the fallen angels who rule through fear and desire first and foremost to be worshipped like God. We know in the Old Testament what happened to the Israelites when they allowed their faith to be contaminated by the pagan/animist beliefs and practices of their neighbors. Let us remember the first commandment, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."

There will be repercussions in our spiritual and moral life if a Catholic seeks power and assistance from the world of the occult. Reading the words of God regarding those who allow their faith to be contaminated by occult spirits and their powers should make us realize the gravity of this sin.

"[Thus says the Lord:] 'Whoever sacrifices to any god, except to the Lord alone, shall be put under the ban' " (Exodus 22:19).

"They multiply their sorrows who court other gods" (Psalm 16:4).

"Follow after other gods to your own harm" (Jeremiah 7:6).

"If, however, your heart turns away and you do not obey, but are led astray and bow down to other gods and serve them, I tell you today that you will certainly perish" (Deuteronomy 30:17-18).

"You shall not go after other gods, any of the gods of the surrounding peoples… lest the anger of the Lord, your God, flare up against you" (Deuteronomy 6:14-15).

Inculturation

Inculturation is important in evangelization but the challenge here is that we must be very careful not to inculturate elements of our animist/pagan idolatrous past which brings about contamination with the world of the fallen angels. I will not delve too much on this topic since the previous volumes as well as my other books already expound on it. What must be remembered is that inculturation should be focused on integrating our traditional Filipino values with our Catholic faith. I quote the statement of Pope Benedict XVI given in November of 2011. He speaks of proper inculturaton as "the correct integration of the authentic values of cultures into the Christian faith. It liberates from occultism and vanquishes evil spirits, for it is moved by the power of the Holy Spirit." Take note of the second sentence; he is warning us that improper inculturation or syncretism will lead to occultism and the entry of the fallen angels into society which we are seeing now in our country. It is therefore important that before we inculturate a certain tradition of our culture, we first try to discover its origins if it was borne out of pagan dealings with the preternatural world.

Quoting St. John Paul II, he stated that there should be a "need for constant vigilance against all possible forms of syncretism" since "syncretism is harmful." Inculturation has to be done with discernment as our former pope tells us of "those who, in the name of inculturation, run into syncretism." And again, according to Pope Benedict XVI, "Interreligious dialogue when badly understood leads to muddled thinking or to syncretism." a challenge for our

country is the need to purify from our faith all vestiges or remnants (called superstition) of paganism/animism as this becomes a very wide doorway for the demonic to cause extraordinary harassments to a Catholic.

Occultism in our country is secondly seen in the entry into our country of the New Age Movement. This is also occult paganism/animism but merged with other elements which make it unique in its own right. In 2003, the Vatican, through the Pontifical Council for Culture, released a study on the New Age Movement entitled, "Jesus Christ the Bearer of the Water of Life."[16] The council has come to the conclusion that the New Age Movement "runs counter to Christian Revelation." It further states that "it must never be forgotten that many of the movements which have fed the New Age are explicitly anti-Christian." Their stance towards Christianity is not neutral but neutralising… in fact, it is occasionally made abundantly clear that "there is no tolerable place for true Christianity"

What is sad is that in our country, at least from my own experience, the New Age is gaining ground through some misguided elements among the clergy, religious, and lay leaders. As the Vatican document states, "it must unfortunately be admitted that there are too many cases where Catholic centers of spirituality are actively involved in diffusing New Age religiosity in the Church." For example, when I was a seminarian, we were required to attend a seminar on the Enneagram. The Vatican document discusses the Enneagram, "which is the nine-type tool for character analysis, which when used as a means of spiritual growth introduces an ambiguity in the doctrine and the life of the Christian faith." I have encountered within the Church the use of energy or pranic healing instead of prayers for supernatural healing. A number of workshops on prayer, especially those coming from the United States, are not centered on Catholic prayer traditions but on Eastern "mystical" traditions.

It is clear that the New Age Movement is centered more in the cities and within certain sectors of the Church. There is again the focus on gaining and manipulating powers for one's personal agendas. Powers and knowledge (occult and esoteric) that are not from God will only make us believe the great lie of the devil, that we can become gods without God. The devil knows man more than man knows himself due to the superior intellect of a fallen angel, hence he knows that man has some inherent abilities (psychic abilities) that he can use to teach man how to develop in order to make man feel he has the powers of a god. And when he teaches man to open himself up to the preternatural world where the fallen angels dwell, then the devil communicates (spirit guides, familiars, ascended masters, elementals, aliens, etc.) and lends some of his powers as a fallen angel to man so that man feels himself even more powerful. Here man moves from the merely psychic abilities to occult power which is always demonic.

In the realm of the preternatural, these evil spirits masquerading as good spirits will also try to teach man esoteric knowledge or secret knowledge about

the universe but which when read by a discerning Catholic will easily see their diabolical origin since these supposedly "higher knowledge" attacks the Trinitarian God, Jesus' identity, the Church he founded, the teachings of the Bible, and the traditions of the Church. Just go to any bookstore and you will see that all these books with so-called secret knowledge of the universe are taught to New Agers by these spirits of deception.

"The devil comes, many times disguised as an angel, and he speaks to us deceitfully" (Pope Francis).

"Everything that cannot be referred to me is a lie" (Jesus to St. Teresa of Avila).

This is in fact what the New Age Movement tries to teach its followers: that one can recreate the world according to one's desires using psychic and occult powers; one does not need the Trinitarian God, his plan nor his will for us. Man is a potential god and the universe can revolve around him if he learns the rituals and techniques to manipulate it. Man's will, not God's will, is of prime importance in this New Age Movement, hence Catholics, instead of becoming saints and true children of God, become their own gods: self-centered, ambitious, proud, and isolated from God and others.

Sadly, those duped by the lies of the New Age Movement discover much later and to their horror what powers they have been communicating with, what bondages they have formed with these powers, how vulnerable they are now to these unseen powers, how meaningless their lives have become without the true God, how depressed and empty they feel inside, how limited in actuality are the "powers" they have wasted their whole lives to develop, how unfulfilled they are when they later discover the superficiality of all that they have accomplished and attained in life, and how dead are their souls without the Triune God. The New Age Movement is basically a narcissistic, isolating, superficial, and self-absorbing way of life, hence many end up depressed, mentally and emotionally unstable, hollow within, and suicidal. My many experiences in the ministry of exorcism has taught me the stark reality of these sad phenomena.

Persons easily turn to the occult when they desire to get by all means what they want, and fast. They get attracted to it when they believe that God does not care about every detail of their lives or when they think that God is not listening to their prayers.

To understand this deceit of the devil, let us consider this scenario: a son goes to his rich father and asks for a large sum of money. The father does not give it, knowing that his son will use it for drugs; the young son then goes to a con man who lends him this money. The con man knows that the young man will easily fall into an addiction and this will make him even more in need of money and so will continually borrow from him and would fall deeper and deeper in debts, allowing him to manipulate and control the son for his own purposes. The con

man also knows that he would even be able to use the son to blackmail the rich father.

How can one be contaminated by the occult? There are three ways by which this can happen: by direct involvement like practicing occult activities or going to occult practitioners; by being targeted by an occult practitioner, for example, through a love potion (*gayuma*) or curse; and by having an ancestor who was an occult practitioner or deeply involved in the occult.

An insidious way by which evil spirits spread out and contaminate hundreds of thousands of Catholics in Philippine society is through occult practitioners. All fallen angels desire some form of territory where they could lord over while they are not yet bound forever in hell; these territories can be either people or places. Usually demons prefer people. Those that lord over territories are called by the occult term, elementals. What are the dynamics found in an occult practitioner that make him an instrument of the evil one? Here is a typical example: an occultist who comes down from Mt. Banahaw after performing rituals to conjure spirits to make him heal ailments (these ailments are mainly caused by the evil spirits themselves, like an elemental causing rashes on a person who happens to enter its territory). Throughout the year, hundreds come to him for healing; the many demons that he has conjured are divided and spread out to attach themselves and claim rights over the many patients that have come to him. Demons are delighted when they now have dominion and right over a particular person whom they will later affect and harass in a hidden manner. Their desire to be like God is the driving force to such an insatiable craving for souls. It is usually a cluster of demons plus a head demon that attaches to a particular client of the faith healer because spirits never work in isolation. The Catholics who approach the occult practitioner are usually oblivious of this evil web and so they are led to believe that what they receive in forms of healing is for free, without any "payback" time.

If one occult practitioner gives his services to a hundred clients per year, and here in our country, we have hundreds of thousands of them giving their services to many hundreds more, especially in the provinces, how many evil spirits are let loose to form bondages with the Catholic faithful in just one year is beyond our imagination. The teaching of the Church is very strict when it comes to the occult; aside from it being idolatrous, it also has disastrous consequences on the person. Spiritual beings and powers that are not of the supernatural world should be avoided like the plague. Now, to go back to our occult practitioner, after a year, when most of the spirits that he has conjured on Mt. Banahaw have all been sent out to attach themselves to his many clients, he returns to the mountain, usually on a particular special occult day to "recharge," that is, he calls again upon more spirits from hell to send to people for the coming year. Imagine the delight of the demons waiting in line in hell for their chance to be called upon to come upon this world and claim a right over a child of God. And this cycle repeats itself year after year without anyone seeing or

suspecting something evil and therefore no warning of what is truly going on. There are two important related things I would like to emphasize. First, those who go to a particular occult practitioner will form a sort of unholy tie or link with the powerful spirit who is using that occult practitioner. This has to be cut in the Name of Jesus if the person in bondage is being ministered to. Secondly, the more a person goes to an occult practitioner for his services, the more demons will attach to that person. So, even a young child can get possessed if within a span of a few months, he is brought to dozens of occultists for healing, and more and more spirits get attached to him. This entire dynamic operating in our Catholic country is causing so much spiritual blockages and a lot of extraordinary demonic activity in Philippine society. My team and I have seen this happen again and again ad nauseam. This is why I emphasize and I talk so adamantly against going to occult practitioners; a person can truly be defiled by going to them. When we hear in the news about a group of school children getting possessed, we can already say with certainty that each one of them has been brought repeatedly to occultists.

"You shall not practice magic, you shall not practice witchcraft. My child, flee from every evil thing and from everything like it" (Didache).

In dealing with the victims of occult activities and practitioners, the exorcist gives the person assignments of renouncing and confessing these sinful practices before an exorcism is done.

Regarding the second way of becoming contaminated by the occult, a Catholic can become vulnerable to a curse (set of demons sent against him) when he is not protected spiritually by grace. According to the book, *The Rite*, "a curse causes the suffering of others through the intervention of a demon. Curses break up marriages, cause businesses to fail, induce illness, invite possession, and so on. Curses can be carried out in a variety of ways, say exorcists. Most are the result of magic formulas or rituals performed by a warlock or a witch. Sometimes a person is affected directly (by ingesting a cursed object) and sometimes indirectly (by possessing cursed objects)."[17] It continues, "The first people to be affected by a curse are often the ones who cast it, say exorcists. A jilted lover who goes to a magician to have a curse put on the girl who spurned him will perhaps fall into a dangerous pattern of returning to the magician for other reasons, such as to obtain a lucky charm to win over a new girlfriend. According to exorcists, this could not only lead to financial ruin, but in extreme cases, also to possession."[18]

In my experience in the ministry, an occult practitioner is able to ascertain whether a person is at that moment spiritually vulnerable; he uses his occult powers with the spirit world to get the information he needs. If a person is psychic or is psychically vulnerable to the spirit world, the curse becomes even more effective. A point to remember is that if a Catholic has been frequenting occult practitioners, like faith healers, the curses sent against him will have an

effect. Being in the state of grace, frequenting the sacraments like the Mass and regular Confession, having a prayer life which includes prayers for protection, using the sacramentals like the St. Benedict's Medal, and having a real devotion to Mama Mary and the angels protect one from the attacks of these agents of the devil. When dealing with curses, the victim is spiritually prepared first before the exorcists cut the curses and expel the spirits connected with them.

The third way that one can be contaminated by the occult is having an ancestor who was into the occult. It is common knowledge that witchcraft goes down to the next generations; it is not the power that is handed down from a father to a son or daughter but the group of occult spirits that have been conjured and used by the father. This is where prayers for intergenerational liberation are used; they aid in cutting off the rights granted to these spirits by an ancestor and expel them so that they stop from going down to the future generations. Before these prayers are said, the victim is first asked to renounce the consecrations done by the ancestor to destroy the rights these spirits have over the family line.

To go down the next generations, these intergenerational spirits will usually force a member of the next generation to accept these spirits and their powers, through the pleadings of the ancestor when he is about to die or through manifestations of different types of sicknesses and oppressions. Demonic spirits will forever have an insatiable desire to have authority over persons. But even though the spirits have not been formally accepted, they still go down the family lines but with less rights and therefore less authority over the next generation. I will give a typical example which I have experienced in the ministry, of a witch or wizard (male witch) who has children. These children already have spirits attached to them once they are born but they are not yet usually that many for them to manifest their presence in a more tangible way. But when the occult parent is about to die, he passes on his powers (or the bulk of the occult demonic spirits) to either a favorite child or the most psychic among them. The demonic spirits will give the dying parent a hard time so that he is able to force a son or a daughter to accept these spirits. If the parent dies and was unsuccessful in passing on these occult spirits, they still go down the family line and distribute themselves among all the children although their rights over them would be less. In my experience, it is the favorite child and/or the most psychic of them who attracts most of the occult spirits and can therefore experience, among the siblings, the most difficulties, especially if this child has a mediocre or lukewarm faith life. If the demons were accepted by a son or daughter, the majority of them would go down to the accepting child and a strong bondage is formed with this person; the remaining spirits then spread themselves among the other siblings.

What would protect a child from intergenerational spirits? First, even before a child is conceived, the parents should not allow themselves to be contaminated with occult spirits through occult practices or activities. If there is an occult contamination, before a child is conceived, the parents must pray prayers that

renounce and destroy the rights of intergenerational spirits as well as pray regularly the prayers of liberation. If the child has already been born, then the minor exorcism in the baptismal rite would break the rights of any intergenerational spirits although the spirits will remain in the vicinity of the parents and may try to regain certain rights over the child through any openings the child might acquire as he is growing up. The parents (if they have not yet been liberated from intergenerational spirits) are advised to bless regularly their child with holy water in the forehead while praying the prayers of blessing and protection and sometimes the prayers of liberation or deliverance. The parents must also make sure that the child is not brought to occult practitioners when he gets sick or pin any kind of occult object on him like talismans and amulets because these would become the doorways where intergenerational spirits, if they are still attached to the parents, may gain access to the child.

Intergenerational prayers of liberation are also needed when there seems to be a pattern of sin going down the generations like, for example, infidelity. An ancestor, due to grave and repeated sins of unfaithfulness, attracts spirits specializing in this type of sin. The next generation then experiences tendencies or even strong temptations towards infidelity due to the spirits going down to the members of their generation; if the members of this generation are not serious about growing in their spiritual lives and remaining faithful to living a life of virtue, they easily fall into the same sins that their ancestor succumbed to. More spirits of infidelity will lodge on to them and the cycle continues becoming even more addictive. I would like to point out that there is no such thing as intergenerational sins that are inherited from the parents or ancestors and which the next generation has to make amends for; and unless this is done, problems will continue in the life of the present generation. This is a teaching that is sometimes taught in books on intergenerational healing which is theologically unsound. The only inherited sin going down the generations is Original Sin, and Baptism takes away this sin. Baptism totally cleanses the soul, hence anything that goes down the family line is always something that is external to it; it is the evil spirits going down the family line due to an occult lineage and these are external to the soul. Clearly then, it is the evil spirits (for example, spirits of infidelity) that go down the generation and not the sin.

In the experience of AMOE and my own personal experience and readings, one of the most powerful and obstinate occult spirits that go down the family generations are the spirits that are connected with Masonry. We usually have a tougher time expelling Masonic spirits that come down to the next generation. Masonry, according to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, is a religion and not a mere fraternity. My experience of dealing with occult spirits connected to Masonry points to this reality. I would not go into much detail here but I would just like to end this paragraph with a quote from the DECLARATION ON MASONIC ASSOCIATIONS by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of

the Faith (November 26, 1983). According to the Vatican document, "The Church's negative judgment in regard to Masonic association remains unchanged since their principles have always been considered irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Church and therefore membership in them remains forbidden. The faithful who enroll in Masonic associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion." We have been warned.

Returning to generational spirits, I quote again from the author, Adam Blai: "When a child is not of age to make free will choices, their parents have spiritual authority over them to make choices for them… some parents willingly give their children to the demonic when they are still in the womb, or shortly after birth. This can be done in a multi-generational cult or some other circumstance where a person has authority over a child."[19]

To conclude this topic on occult power, let us study our faith: "All practices of magic or sorcery, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them at one's service and have supernatural power over others—even if this were for the sake of restoring their health—are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2117).

"When one does not profess Jesus Christ— I recall the phrase of Leon Bloy— whoever does not pray to God, prays to the devil. When one does not profess Jesus Christ, one professes the worldliness of the devil" (Pope Francis, first sermon of his pontificate, March 15, 2013).

"Anyone who breaks off friendship with Jesus, casting off his 'easy yoke," does not attain liberty, does not become free, but succumbs to other powers" (Pope Benedict XVI).

In a society that focuses on so many superstitious and New Age beliefs and practices in order to gain good luck and all that the material world has to offer in life, the Church must remain steadfast in proclaiming that faith and trust in God's love and power are all that we need to experience the real and only fullness of life. As Pope Benedict XVI mentioned in his encyclical letter *Spe Salvi*, "It is not the elemental spirits of the universe, the laws of matter, which ultimately govern the world and mankind, but a personal God governs the stars, that is, the universe; it is not the laws of matter and of evolution that have the final say, but reason, will, love—a Person. And if we know this Person and he knows us, then truly the inexorable power of material elements no longer has the last word; we are not slaves of the universe and of its laws, we are free."

Psychic Abilities

From my experience in the many cases we have handled, psychic abilities can easily become open doorways to extraordinary demonic activity. Many of our

cases in the office manifest psychic abilities. On the year 2014 alone, about half of our cases were psychically open, meaning, they are sensitive to the preternatural spirit world around us. And from January to June of the year 2015, 67% of our cases were psychic. To be psychic not only makes a person more susceptible to oppression and obsession but also makes him more easily possessed because a psychic can easily be placed into an altered state of consciousness. When a person is brought into a hypnotic trance state, another consciousness can replace the consciousness of the person and take over the body of that person. This is possession.

There are two perspectives with regard to psychic abilities: the first is the parapsychological perspective and the second is the occult perspective. Viewing this phenomenon with the lens of a more scientific perspective, we do not see the spiritual dangers that may be involved when someone tries to develop this ability. The following clarification in the next paragraph is given by parapsychologists.

Psychical research was recognized as a science in the year 1969 when the American Association for the Advancement of Science accepted the Parapsychological Association as an affiliated organization. Psychic ability or Psi is divided into extrasensory perception or ESP and psychokinesis or PK. ESP is the perceptive aspect of the psychic ability which means it is analogous to sensory function but without the use of sense organs; one is able to gain knowledge of certain facts and events without the use of any of the five senses. PK, on the other hand, is the causal aspect of psi which means that it is analogous to motor activity without the use of motor organs such as muscles; one is able to manipulate objects without using any of the five senses. The power of the mind is what manipulates the object. Another term used for psychic ability is the sixth sense.

Looking at the psychic ability and its powers from a more occult spiritual perspective, we see more clearly the dangers involved when a Catholic delves into this phenomenon. Its pagan background is clearly manifested. The following definition in the next paragraph is given by occult practitioners themselves.

The psychic ability in occult terminology is called the third eye (also known as the inner eye); it is a mystical and esoteric concept referring in part to the ajna (brow) chakra in certain Eastern and Western spiritual traditions. It is also seen as the gate that leads within to the inner realms and spaces of higher consciousness. In the New Age Movement, the third eye may alternately symbolize a state of enlightenment. It is also associated with visions, clairvoyance (which includes the ability to observe chakras and auras), precognition, astral travel, and out-of-body experiences; people who have allegedly developed the capacity to utilize their third eye are sometimes known as seers. It is through the third eye that man will again possess the faculty of perception to the higher worlds as well as have the ability to communicate with

entities in these worlds.

Looking at this phenomenon now with the lens of our Catholic philosophical and theological traditions, we can surmise the following:

First, let us remember that being psychic connects a person merely to the preternatural world and never the supernatural world of God, the saints, and the good angels. The saints and angels are in the supernatural dimension due to their being in supernatural grace. The only means by which a person can come into contact with the supernatural world is through grace which is received in Baptism; and it is only through faith and prayer that one can communicate with the supernatural or divine world. Hence, a sensitive person, even if he were the greatest psychic in the world will never be able to sense nor see Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament nor see and have a dialogue with the guardian angel of someone. The preternatural world lies below the supernatural world and it is a purely spiritual world but not part of the divine supernatural one because divine grace is not present. This world is above the natural world where man resides, including all creatures that are rooted in matter. So there are basically three worlds: the natural world, the preternatural world above it, and the supernatural world which is totally beyond our world.

Returning to the preternatural world which is in-between the natural and the supernatural, this world is where the fallen angels reside. Fallen angels are pure spirits, therefore they are not part of our world of matter but they also do not belong to the supernatural world, for they sinned and have no divine grace in them, hence we call them fallen angels. Now, man is not pure matter like the objects of nature that have no life in them; he has a soul. This soul is superior to that of the plants and animals since this soul is a rational soul, that is, it has faculties that are purely spiritual in nature which are his intellect and will. These two faculties are precisely why man is said to be created in the image of God since God has both intellect and will. Animals and plants have souls (sentient and vegetative) but which are not rooted in the spiritual (because they have no purely spiritual faculties like man), hence when they die, their souls return to nothingness. We will therefore never see our pets in heaven; they have no capacity to relate to God with love and understanding. Much more will we not see our favorite plants and garden in heaven.

Man, although living in this material world and having material faculties (senses, emotion, imagination, and memory), has, as discussed earlier, a soul rooted in the spiritual, hence he has the capacity to interact with the preternatural and the supernatural world. With Baptism, he is able to relate to the supernatural world since the Holy Spirit divinizes his soul with divine presence. He may also get in touch with the spirits in the preternatural world through their aid by means of the occult. Through occult techniques and rituals, the demons make the person psychic or sensitive to them; in occult terms, we say that the person opens his third eye. Opening one's third eye is always the

first requirement for anyone who desires to gain access to the spirits and powers in the preternatural world or the world of spirits. A spirit of divination is granted to this person so that he can interact with this world of spirits. In the ministry of exorcism, when we close a person's psychic ability so that he will no longer be harassed by the preternatural world, we expel the spirit of divination that has latched on to him and who keeps open this ability to "see."

Before moving further, it is important to know and remember that Eastern religions make a person reach only as far as the preternatural world, never the supernatural world where the Triune God is; and so even the basic knowledge that there is only one God is alien to them. Their so-called state of enlightenment, which is also found in the New Age Movement, can never connect one with the Triune God. Only with the grace (Holy Spirit) of God through, with, and in Jesus Christ will one be able to know the Father and enter into the divine life of the Trinity. According to the teachings of the great Doctor of the Church, St. Teresa of Avila, authentic mystical prayer always brings us to a greater knowledge of the Triune God.

"No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God who is at the Father's side, has revealed him" (John 1:18).

This is important to remember since some Catholics try merging Eastern forms of meditation with Catholic prayer. A Catholic will only end up opening his so-called third eye and this will make him vulnerable to the preternatural world of the fallen angels. This will open him to either deceiving and lying spirits manifesting through false mystical experiences or he will suddenly find himself suffering from intense temptations and extraordinary demonic attacks that were not present before. This happens much more so when he is striving to be holy.

"It follows that to pray in any other way than the Son has taught us is not only the result of ignorance but of sin" (St. Cyprian).

It is sad and unfortunate that some Catholics are looking for a deeper spirituality, but instead of going deeper in the knowledge of their faith, they try novel means from outside the faith which, of course, ends with deception and bondage. All that is needed to have an authentic relationship with God has already been given to us through Christ. As Catholics, we only use the means that Jesus has taught us to have a relationship with the Triune God; so if one uses certain means to get in touch with God which is not from the Lord, what will come into the picture will be the unclean spirits. By way of an example, in addition to going into an altered state of consciousness to get in contact with the divine, a person tries to get answers from the Holy Spirit when making decisions in life using a pendulum; guess who will answer?

As Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich, the greatest visionary of the Church

and recently beatified by St. John Paul II, states, "When one becomes a clairvoyant (psychic)… then one of man's faculties possessed before the fall, a faculty not entirely extinct, is in a certain measure resuscitated, and he lies helpless in a most mysterious state, exposed to the attacks of the evil one." And she adds that when one becomes a psychic, "that which is holiest in man is exposed to the baneful influence of the evil spirit."

Now, a question is asked: are there normally psychic persons? What do I mean by normally psychic persons? They are persons who are sensitive to the preternatural world through the natural human condition and not due to an occult spirit. Yes, I believe so. The first reason is seen from the statement of Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich who mentions a fully functioning faculty that Adam and Eve had before their fall into original sin which continues to exist but in a very negligible degree in persons. Second, there are persons who are more right-brained than left-brained and are therefore more creative and artistic and also more intuitive than the average person. There seems to be a thin line dividing intuition and psychic ability and a person may unknowingly develop his psychic ability, believing that he is merely using his intuition. For example, a person may think he is using his intuition when making a judgment about a person whom he has just met and whom he feels a dislike to when actually he is using his psychic ability by psychically reading the person and making very detailed (though not necessarily correct) judgments already about him.

Pursuing this line of thought, there is a greater probability that a person is normally psychic when there has been no occult contamination and involvement by the person himself, his family, as well as his ancestors. If his psychic ability is minimal, this could also point to a more psychically normal person. An example would be a woman sitting on a bench; behind her is a man staring at her intently. She suddenly feels that someone is staring at her and this makes her turn around. On the other hand, a person whose psychic abilities are more than minimal and therefore point to an occult foundation is a person who can see the auras of others. Another way to determine if one is naturally psychic is if this ability does not hinder his day-to-day activities or cause him undue duress.

In reality, it is actually quite difficult to determine whether a person is normally psychic or not and maybe the best recourse would be to renounce and to consecrate this ability to God and to regularly pray the prayers of liberation so that should there be spirits of divination present, they would be expelled. From my experience, a person who is normally psychic is quite rare since most of those I met, after digging deeper, had occult spirits as the source of their abilities. If one believes that he is normally psychic, he should still offer and consecrate this psychic ability to God through Mama Mary in front of the Blessed Sacrament. The demons then may not use it as a doorway to harass him; he must also wear the sacramentals of the Church like the St. Benedict's Medal, etc. It is important for these persons to remember and for those who have been

freed from spirits of divination to be aware not to use this ability as it may develop (like a muscle) to make one more and more psychically vulnerable to the spirit world. Many call this ability a gift, but it never is one, especially if the source is from the occult. Again, it must be emphasized that even if one were normally psychic, one should not use it since it would tend to become stronger.

So for us Catholics, it is important to remember that one does not need to be psychic to become a saint and enter heaven or become a recipient of God's manifold blessings in this world. Jesus never spoke about opening one's third eye to live well in this world; his Church tells us the exact opposite about its dangers. I know of no saint written about who was also a psychic, yet the saints were the most peaceful and joyful of persons, having all that was required to live holy and fulfilled lives. Catholics should never believe the lies of the New Age Movement regarding the need for this ability in one's life. As the Vatican document on the New Age, *Jesus Christ, the Bearer of the Water of Life*, tells us, "The point of *New Age* techniques is to reproduce mystical states at will, as if it were a matter of laboratory material… these practices all create an atmosphere of psychic weakness (and vulnerability)." The come-on of the New Age Movement is actually centered on the old man in us, strengthening it and therefore weakening the new man in Christ in us; for instance, the proponents of the New Age Movement will tell us that by developing this so-called "gift," one will be able to harness the cosmic powers of the universe and attract good fortune. And to maximize this "gift," add some crystals and magnets into the mix. It is so easy to see here the occult dimension.

"See to it that no one captivate you with an empty, seductive philosophy according to human tradition, according to the elemental powers of the world and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

At present, here in our country, we must beware of programs, especially given to business executives, that have occult undertones and names like science of the mind. God is our loving Father who desires us to discover his Fatherly love for us so that we may respond also in love for him and grow in our relationship with him. Let us please God by showing him that he is truly enough for us in this life; actually he is infinitely more than enough. As his children, let us not seek what we need outside of God. The real gift for a Catholic is grace and this is where he should focus all his time and energy.

Some final points to consider are in order.

1. It is common knowledge that women are known to be more intuitive than men, hence they also tend to be more psychic. It is therefore understandable why there are more women who become occult specialists, like witches, than men. Children, whether male or female, whose left brain or the rational part of the brain is still less developed tend also to be more creative and

imaginative and therefore more psychic than adults. There are adults, who when they were still children, could see and sense ghosts and spirits; later on in life, this ability disappears. These dynamics make women and children more psychically vulnerable to the spirit world attacks than their counterparts. Just listening to the news, one notices how easily children, whether as individuals, or as a group, get possessed. In our office in the year 2014, 73% of our cases were female compared with only 27% who were male.

2. One must be careful nowadays if one has the tendency to be psychic since there is a particular psychic attack done by occultists. This attack places the psychically vulnerable person in some form of hypnotic trance and makes the person do things that he would not normally do like withdrawing money from his ATM and hands it to the occult hypnotist. These occultists seem to know who is psychically vulnerable and who is not. Having the proper spiritual protection, like saying prayers to Mama Mary against such attacks and the wearing of sacramentals, will protect us from this form of attack.

3. Another point to be careful about is this: there are certain moments when a person becomes psychic, or is more psychic; these are: when one is asleep, especially the moments right before sleep, as well as the moments just before waking. Another instance is when a person nears death. In sleep, one can be prone to demonic nightmares as well as incubus and succubus assaults. Near death, persons tend to become sensitive to seeing spirits. It is therefore important to use the sacramentals like holy water during these moments.

4. There are persons who may volunteer to assist an exorcist or maybe a deliverance team headed by a priest. These persons claim to have certain powers that could be of help to the ministry. Just by using the word “power” should put one already on guard since it is my experience that what they mean is usually psychic or occult power and not charism. Their use of the word “power” already points to an improper disposition for the pastoral ministry of liberation. There is a radical difference in the three. Psychic power is simply using psychic abilities which, as was mentioned, is dangerous and what is more, it could be contaminated with occult power. Occult power is diabolical power. Charism comes from the Greek, meaning “free gift” and they are graces of the Holy Spirit for building up the Church. You will know a person is psychic when his so-called powers are active 24/7 or are erratic in their use. A charism, on the other hand, is only manifested when it is needed like during the ministry itself. For example, some lay volunteers who assist in our office when we do house exorcisms are only able to discern or detect the infesting spirits when we are in ministry; if we were to visit a house outside of ministry, they will not have any inkling if there are evil spirits present or none. Exorcists doing house exorcisms may bring along a person who has the appropriate charism and not a psychic. It is to the advantage of the work of

the exorcist to have these persons in their team. We have a few of these persons who have passed first our rigid scrutiny and testing. How does one detect if a person has an authentic charism and not an occult power masquerading as a charism? I have encountered charismatic groups with members who do not use charisms but occult power. The demons are easily able to mimic charisms, hence one must always be discerning. One must always test the spirits when it comes to charisms. I have encountered demoniacs who, when they were being exorcised, were “praying in tongues”! Some pointers on how to detect occult power masquerading as a charism would be to check the source. How was it attained? If it was passed down from an ancestor (charisms are never passed down but are given by God directly to the person when there is a need), or given in an occult setting like Mt. Banahaw, or given by a spirit from the preternatural world (spirit guides, ascended masters, elementals, aliens, and the like), then automatically we are already in the world of the occult. Another point is to check the fruits, especially the spiritual fruits (growth in the virtues/holiness of life) as well as its effectiveness in the ministry. As always, proper guidance from Church authority and humble prayers to Mama Mary so that one may be led to the truth are of paramount importance.

Openings Part II

"I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one"

—John 17:15

Sin

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, sin is a "deviation from man's true ultimate end" and it is "self-love in opposition to the love of God." Sin is therefore the only thing that can separate us from God and the life of heaven; all other things and circumstances in the world, even the most painful and difficult, can be used, with God's grace, to draw one closer to God and to merit heaven. Sin is located in the will of man who makes choices for good or for bad. The devil cannot touch the will directly, only indirectly, hence the devil cannot force anyone to sin. A possessed person does not sin when he acts out during a crisis state, but when he returns to his lucidity and calm, he can choose to either sin or not. Sin is the gravest of openings that we can create for the devil to enter into one's life, especially mortal sin since it destroys sanctifying grace in the soul. A person not in the state of grace becomes a source of attraction for the unclean spirits. Imagine a house where a lot of sin is occurring; this attracts more and more demons and they then aggravate even more the evil situation. If the quantity and quality of the sins continue to increase, the house sooner or later becomes haunted or what we call infested. Anyone who later lives in that house will experience strong temptations connected with the sins that were committed there. This is the same with a soul that remains long without grace. Of course, we mentioned that the devil would not normally "rock the boat" so that the sinner dies in his sin; but if he senses that a person may still be able to escape his clutches or that there is still some good in the person, enough to bring about his return to the Lord, then the devil will try to use the opportunity of the lack of grace in the sinner's soul to escalate his attacks. Being in the state of sin for a long period of time will immediately manifest the gravity of the situation; temptations would tend to be replaced by more extraordinary forms of demonic

attack. This occurs especially when the other openings such as occult contamination, trauma, and having a so-called third eye are present.

Being long in the state of sin without the sacrament of Reconciliation has other effects; the sins, of course, will tend to increase in number and become even more serious in nature. Sin will also spread and contaminate the other areas of the person's life. As months and even years pass, more and more spirits will attach themselves and make the person obstinate with a dead conscience. I share a story which I read recently from the book of Fr. Dominic Szymanski, OFM Conv. entitled, *Truth about the Devil*:

> *In a certain Illinois city, a man lay dying of cancer of the throat which doctors had pronounced as incurable, and had declared that death would follow soon. The good sisters of the hospital, in which he was a patient, had tried in vain to have him go to confession, sending priest after priest to speak to him. Each priest was treated in the same way. As soon as he would mention confession, the sick man simply turned to the wall, saying that there were other sick who wanted to confess their sins, but that it was a waste of time for the priest to talk to him about it, because he did not want to go to confession. The continual insistence of the priests and sisters so angered him that he left the hospital. After a few weeks, another hemorrhage occurred, and the family in haste and desperation again sent for a priest, hoping against hope that he would not die without the Sacraments. Two priests of the parish had visited him previously without success, so this time a priest who had had some experience with a number of cases of exorcism went to the sick man. As usual he turned to the wall. The exorcist stood at the foot of the bed and ordered the devil: "I command you, evil spirit, in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, to depart, I command you in the name of our Lord Jesus Crucified to leave this room so that this soul will return to its God and Creator." These words were said secretly. The sick man turned and said, "I do not know how to confess." The answer of the priest was: "I will help you. I will ask you questions, you merely answer yes or no." Once the confession was begun, the sick man broke into tears, and made a most humble and contrite confession. The priest then hurried back to the Church and brought him Viaticum… the next morning, the poor man died.*[20]

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1667, "Holy Mother Church has, moreover, instituted sacramentals. These are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects, particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the intercession of the Church. By them, men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy." As each sacramental is related to a particular sacrament which it disposes the person to and facilitates its effects on the person, the sacramental of exorcism is particularly related to the sacrament

of Reconciliation. The sacramental of exorcism purifies the body of the dominion of the devil as the sacrament of Reconciliation purifies the soul of the dominion of the devil.

The ministry of liberation should therefore go hand-in-hand with the sacrament of Reconciliation; it must assist and lead to Reconciliation and must also facilitate its effects in a person's life. A person, after many years in mortal sin, goes to confession; his soul is freed from the evil one but the many demons that have continually piled up in his life attaching themselves to his lower faculties may still remain although diminished in number depending upon his sincerity during his confession. These remaining spirits can still cause havoc in this person's life as he tries now to be more faithful to the Lord. This is where prayers of liberation, minor exorcisms, and the sacramentals, which were given to us as weapons and protection against the fallen angels, come into play.

Perhaps we have heard of long-time sinners who, after a conversion (which includes confession), experience an immediate rise of difficulties in life, spanning from relationships, business, emotions, health, and the like. A priest may hear the words, "Father, why is it that after I returned to God, my life has become more difficult?" The answer: the remaining demons attached to the person, seeing their captured prey escape, now come out in the open to retaliate, harass, and try to break down the commitment of the person. This is when the person now becomes aware of the number of demons that have attached to his life throughout the years without his being aware of what was happening.

"When he (the devil) can't deceive through stealth, he threatens explicitly and openly, holding out the fear of violent persecution to vanquish God's servants. He's always restless and always hostile, crafty in peace and fierce in persecution" (St. Cyprian).

The person now needs to be especially taught and guided on how to engage in spiritual warfare. He must be taught how to wear the armor of light and the use of the spiritual weapons that destroy demonic strongholds.

Sin does not only remove the protective armor that a Catholic should always have on but also continued sinning attracts even more spirits as well as strengthens the concupiscence. This brings about more disorder to the faculties, which gives the demons more power over him. Therefore, we must never waste a single moment when we fall into mortal sin, to seek immediately for a priest for confession to break the buildup of the demons in our lives, but most of all, to allow God to come again into our lives, for even a single moment of being in the state of sin hurts our loving Father infinitely, hence we must immediately set out to return to him.

The gravity of sin and its effects on a person are seen in the words of St. John: "Whoever sins belongs to the devil" (1 John 3:8).

Trauma

The final major opening is trauma. From January to June of the year 2015, around 1 out of 3 of our cases has this opening. Relevant to the ministry, I would define trauma to mean an abuse that a person experiences at the hands of another which causes a very negative and deep repercussion, particularly in the emotional life of the person. A trauma in the life of a person, especially if it occurs at a young age and done repeatedly, can become an opening to extraordinary demonic attack. This trauma would usually be in the form of sexual abuse, but other types of physical abuse are also part of the spectrum. Although any very negative action done to a person can attract evil spirits, it is the resulting deep sadness, loneliness, fear, and hatred that allow the unclean spirits to really attach themselves to the victim. Unforgiveness in the heart of the victim is a particularly powerful force that keeps evil spirits imbedded and obstinate in the person. When I was in Rome attending a course on exorcism, it was reiterated several times by three different speakers that it is impossible to exorcise someone who has unforgiveness in his heart. We in the ministry testify to this truth.

This is one of the reasons why there is now an increase in extraordinary demonic attacks; we see an increasing number of people growing up in dysfunctional homes. Unlike in previous generations, when families were intact and where there was a Christian atmosphere in homes and there were fewer external difficulties like poverty, today's families are not anymore the spiritual and moral shelters they once were. I have seen in the many cases that come to seek assistance from the office how trauma can create very powerful demonic strongholds in the life of a person. Because of this reality, we have these cases undergo counseling as part of the process of liberation. We also do inner healing prayers (asking God to heal the emotional pains and hurts) so that the person can respond wholeheartedly and sincerely to God's invitation to return to him. The person's free and determined choice is of paramount importance here. Intense negative emotions in a person like dread, deep sadness, hatred, and unforgiveness can become blocks to the graces of God. God desires to give himself fully to his children in an intimacy of life and love but the problem is the capacity or space that each one actually gives the Lord so he can enter into one's life. When handling difficult cases that may last a long period of time, I noticed that evil spirits primarily entered the victim's life through the occult but their power to cling obstinately and refuse to be expelled centered on the deep negativity found in the person's heart.

Our newest lay volunteer in the office used to be one of our cases. She was handled directly by Fr. Winston when he was still an exorcist-in-training. He asked me for assistance since the person had been exorcised a number of times but the spirits seemed to return after some days of calm. Fr. Winston brought her to the office together with her grandparents. The other members of the team

were present to assist in the exorcism. As I started to pray the prayers of exorcism, she became violent and had to be held down in the chair. The grandparents were seated behind the victim and I later learned that they were very distraught with what they witnessed because this was the first time they actually saw their granddaughter being prayed over and her reactions to the prayers. She was a totally different person from the meek and carefree girl that they knew. I ended the session when the spirits let go of her. I met the team and together we discerned that fear in her heart kept the spirits attached to her and that she needed to have full faith and confidence in God's protection. I told Fr. Winston to speak to the victim in order to validate our discernment. Whenever we discern, we always bring the discernment back to the person concerned to validate it; we also present the discernment in general nonjudgmental terms so that the person is merely invited to look at that particular area in his life in order to check any blocks that may be present. Fr. Winston went and spoke to the victim and by what she shared, she confirmed that what we discerned was true; she had fear in her heart regarding her situation and lacked faith that she would be freed from the demons tormenting her. So Fr. Winston spiritually counseled her in order to eradicate this fear from her heart. Immediately after that, she was totally and permanently liberated from possession.

Dynamics of a Possession

First, taking into account the four major openings that were discussed above, it is important to note that for a person to experience extraordinary demonic attacks, a combination of the four is usually necessary unless one of the openings has reached a critical level. For example, having traumatic experiences alone will not lead to obsession or oppression unless the gravity and number, as was mentioned, reaches a certain critical level. We know of many people who have been abused in one way or another and they did not get oppressed or possessed; although the devil will use the woundedness of the person to tempt him towards hatred, mistrust, jealousy, self-harm, and the like. But if this particularly wounded person enters into the occult to gain a sense of power, then this would make him open to extraordinary demonic attack. Another example is of a practicing Catholic, who through ignorance, tries to develop his psychic abilities. As there is a very thin line between what is within the realm of parapsychology and what is occult, he unknowingly enters into the world of the preternatural spirits and begins to hear disembodied voices which marks the beginning of demonic obsession. One must be aware that some books on parapsychology may not know the boundaries between parapsychology and the occult, hence you would find within the pages of these books discussion of occult topics such as past lives, chakras, channeling, universal energies, tarot cards, astrology, divination, crystal balls, palmistry, Reiki, etc. As part of the subject matter.

Second dynamic. A look at how extraordinary demonic attack escalates: here's a child who comes from a lineage of spiritists and faith healers. As a child, he is already open to the preternatural world because of the spirits of divination that have come down through his ancestors, especially a grandparent who was known to be a powerful faith healer and someone who had easy access to the spirits. As a child, his father, who may be a Catholic, would do regularly pagan rituals over this child, especially during important events in the child's life, like blood rituals where the father would smear blood on the forehead of the child during his birthdays. The child is being left alone most of the time and psychic, the unclean spirits begin appearing to him in forms that are innocent and they befriend the child. The "imaginary friends" that the parents see him speaking to and playing with are real.

As the child enters school age, the parents continue with their pagan rituals and elementals are seen more and more frequently in their house. The child starts getting sickly, having regular fevers and skin problems, so the parents start bringing him to faith healers and spiritists from their own family and eventually to those known to be more powerful because the child's healing is always only temporary and the next sickness would be worse than the one before. Other ailments also appear. The child is given amulets to wear and potions to drink. Here, the child starts to experience demonic obsessions.

When the child reaches high school, he becomes fascinated with his psychic abilities and tries to develop them. He and his friends develop an unhealthy curiosity with the occult and they try different methods to be able to communicate with the dead as well as to look into the future. They use tarot cards, "play spirit of the glass" under an old gnarled Balete tree, and the like. They meet frequently during weekend evenings to go ghost hunting. Here the boy starts to experience demonic oppression; the attacks have now escalated to a dangerous degree. Instead of seeking help from the Church, the parents continue to bring him to occult specialists for treatment of his maladies.

The boy is now a young man in college; he goes to the city to study and there he stops going to Sunday Mass as well as confession. He does not experience any sort of consolation from prayer and stops praying even the most basic prayers. With a bad *barkada*, he falls into drinking liquor. He has, for a long time now, been in the state of mortal sin. At one point, he is invited by his *barkada* to his first drug session. During the middle of the session, he suddenly goes into a wild rampage terrifying all those around. He blurts out incomprehensible words, screaming, and physically hurting the others with preternatural strength. Here the young man has reached the point of possession.

This is what we call the buildup of extraordinary demonic attack from obsession, to oppression to full-blown possession. If, in our example, the *barkada* is able to bring this young man to a parish priest, what the priest should do in this situation is to do a "first-aid" intervention. Using sacramentals (like holy water, exorcised oil, exorcised salt, relics of the saints as well as a crucifix

preferable with the St. Benedict's Medal) and minor exorcisms, he would be able to expel a number of the demons. Usually, if the priest is spiritually prepared and he has people around praying with faith, the demoniac would be freed within only a short period of time. This has been my experience. These evil spirits have not prepared themselves to encounter Jesus in the person of the priest. Most of the time these evil spirits attached to the bodies of people have only encountered the power of other fallen angels through the other occult practitioners that the person has gone to for healing. They have never encountered the power of God himself working within the Church particularly through the priesthood. What is important is that when the demoniac has been calmed, he must be interviewed immediately. This will reveal the many openings which began when he was still a child (as well as intergenerational openings) which the spirits used to enter into his life. When these openings are known, appropriate assignments are given to address them, such as renouncements to break the rights of the demons, getting rid of the amulets and talismans, etc. The most important thing is to reestablish the relationship of the person with God and make a sincere choice for God. Here the sacraments are of utmost importance beginning with Confession.

The parish priest must never be deceived that just because the demoniac has become calm again, his role is finished. If there is no follow-up interview immediately afterwards and appropriate assignments given, the person may, after a short time, be possessed again since the many openings that he has are still very much operative. The demons may try to hide themselves so that the person will think that all is already fine and will not return to the priest. This will allow the evil spirits to remain attached to the person as they slowly continue to destroy the person through a life of sin; it will be in hell where they, having now full right over the person, manifest themselves again tangibly to the person and in a much more powerful and terrifying manner. The simple exorcisms of the parish priest would have expelled a number of spirits, hence they will have weakened enough so that they could not at that moment take over the body of the victim. However, as I mentioned, this calm is only temporary. The demoniac is like a lake where there are many rivers and streams that lead to it; if one desires to drain the lake permanently, all the rivers and streams must be blocked or else the water in the lake would continually be replenished and the lake would never be drained. Like the example of the lake, all the openings in the life of the victim must be blocked and the spirits attached expelled, otherwise the person is never completely liberated.

The assignments given to the victim are the blocks to seal up the many openings that have been with him throughout his life. This dynamic is one of the reasons the office (AMOE) tells people that we never do exorcism sessions without knowing the details of a person's life through interviews and narratives. Some people come to the office sometimes demanding that all they need is one pray-over; they do not see the need to follow any protocols. God does not

normally allow a person to be attacked by the demons extraordinarily; so if a person is attacked, especially through possession, this means that they have opened certain doorways and made themselves spiritually vulnerable to this form of attack whether knowingly or unknowingly. It is through the interviews and narratives that the doorways to the demonic are revealed. The person, then, will be given assignments on how to close these doorways. An exorcism session will not address these doorways and vulnerable areas, only moral and spiritual purification and conversion will. May we always remember the warning of our Lord regarding a person who is freed from a demon who later returns with seven more and the state of the person becomes even worse. A certain fear that I have, if I may call it that, is to go into battle when the battlefield has not yet been prepared, that is, to draw out and combat the demons in a demoniac when the person is not yet prepared and committed to enter the battle. Just as a doctor prepares properly a patient for surgery to avoid complications, so an exorcist must have the same solicitude.

In our office, if the victim does his assignments sincerely with full faith and trust in God's goodness and mercy, then he can be totally liberated and there would be no more need for a follow-up exorcism session. But this is rare. To be certain, a follow-up exorcism session is done to check and, if necessary, expel any remaining demons. We go back to our example of the demoniac who is brought to the parish priest. The question may be asked: when does the priest refer the case to the diocesan exorcist? It depends; if during the interview, he discovers that the case has serious openings, then after giving the assignments, he must refer the case to the diocesan exorcist. Or if during the minor exorcism session, the demoniac displayed intense preternatural manifestations, then referral is also necessary. The example given previously of the person who, from his earliest years, had already occult contamination until he took drugs is a serious case that the parish priest must refer to a delegated exorcist after giving the appropriate assignments. Solemn exorcisms must be performed over this person and a more personal journeying is required.

Third dynamic. It must be remembered that a single demon cannot possess a person; it takes a lot of them to take over a human body. When an exorcist using the Roman Ritual of Exorcism commands the demon to tell its name, this name pertains to the head demon or the strongest demon present who is in charge of the other demons. If he is expelled, the others easily follow suit. Remember that demons have a hierarchy, but not of love like the good angels but of coercive arrogant power; they hate each other, trying to lord themselves not only over man and creation but also among themselves. Their desire is always to be on top with all the rest submitting to them. Demons can be expelled in two ways, depending on the circumstances, by first targeting the main demon and the rest would follow or targeting the lesser demons like the many roots of a tree so that the head demon would be easier to expel.

Question: How many demons does it take to possess a person? It seems to

depend on the person concerned. In my own personal experience, every person seems to have a certain capacity that, when filled, allows the demons to possess the person. In our discussion on the second dynamic, we saw during the growing-up years of the victim, more and more demons attached to him through the equally growing number of openings. Thus, we see the victim experiencing an escalation of extraordinary demonic attack from obsession, to oppression, and lastly, the most grievous of which is possession. If there had been a spiritual intervention by an exorcist early on, the person would not have reached the point of possession. The last thing that the person did that made the spirits reach the number they needed to possess the person entirely is what I call the triggering event. When I interview a person, I look for this to help validate whether the case has a demonic origin or not; a lack of a triggering event would point more to a psychological problem than a spiritual one. The triggering event usually would have happened within the week before the possession occurred and would be one of the four major openings that we discussed in this and the previous chapter. The triggering event is what we call the proverbial last straw that broke the camel's back. After discovering the triggering event, I would then focus my interview to the events of the past of the victim, as well as his family background, always looking for the presence of the four major openings. In our office, we let the client answer a checklist to make sure nothing is missed out. By just looking at New Age beliefs and practices, the number of potential openings is already mind-boggling. From the interviews will come the assignments given to prepare the person and the type of prayer interventions, which includes inner healing, prayers for intergenerational liberation, and prayers against the spirit of divination (occult third eye).

Looking at the third dynamic from another perspective, I have come up with a model to help understand better how extraordinary demonic attack escalates.

Compare a person to a glass container with its own specific capacity to hold water. We say that a glass is full when the water poured into it reaches the brim; it has then reached its full capacity or 100% capacity. Now, when a person reaches 100% capacity the number of demons attached, he would then get possessed. From the beginning of his life, if this person has no ancestors who was into the occult, we may say that he is 0% with regard to his capacity. Of course, this does not mean that the devil has not sent demons against him to tempt him; it simply means that they have not attached to him with a certain right over him to be able to harass him beyond temptation. But as he is growing up, he causes and creates openings in his life, giving now the demons rights over him; the demons have now a foundation to start to build up their presence. When they reach 60% capacity, the person will begin to experience demonic obsessions. When the demons reach 80% capacity, he becomes a victim of demonic oppression, and when they reach 100% capacity, he would get possessed. The percentages, of course, are guides, for us to understand how extraordinary demonic attack escalates as the number of demons attached in a

person grow in number.

However, when a person reaches 100% capacity, it does not automatically mean that the demons would bring the person to a state of crisis. All demons are different, having their own particular plans, strategies, and tendencies. As was mentioned, as a rule, they prefer to hide; hence a person could be a walking possessed without him even knowing about it. He would, of course, sense that something is wrong since he would experience demonic obsessions and oppressions whenever he does anything that would bring him closer to the Lord. If an exorcist would do an exorcism over such a person, the full extent of the demonic bondage could be made manifest. Fr. Amorth, the chief exorcist of the Vatican, uses the old Roman Ritual of Exorcism as a diagnostic tool; the rules for the newly revised Roman Ritual states that this newer edition cannot be used as a diagnostic tool. A number of days back, I used the old Roman Ritual prayers of exorcism over a religious sister who was experiencing demonic harassments. She immediately became very violent and had to held down by the team; she was fiercely thrashing around, gnashing her teeth, speaking unknown languages, spitting and vomiting volumes of saliva and other things not proper to mention here. She was very difficult to control once the spirits manifested themselves in all their fury. This was her first time to experience something like this in her entire life and this surprised her; she did not know that she was a walking possessed. Her openings centered on a deeply rooted pagan background; her family was deeply involved in the occult.

Now, even if the spirits have not reached 100% capacity, they would tend to manifest themselves in an aggressive manner when confronted with prayers that directly confront them. They seem to go into a real frenzy and become totally wild when prayers and commands to expel them are made. Returning to our model, if a minor exorcism were done by a priest over a person when he is only at 40% capacity, he will not have any visible negative reaction (although the demons would be affected by the prayers) because the demons would still be quite weak; but if minor exorcisms were done to him when the demons have reached more or less 80% capacity, some form of negative reaction like convulsions (here the person is still conscious), pains in the head and stomach, burping, coughing, and vomiting may occur. But if a solemn exorcism is done to a person with even only 40% capacity of demons, some form of negative reaction will already be noticed since a solemn exorcism is the most powerful prayer of the Church to expel spirits; this prayer forces the demons to manifest themselves or to draw them out. This is comparable to a situation where fire is used in caves to draw out the snakes lurking within. Now, there will be even more severe negative reactions if a solemn exorcism is done on a person whose capacity has already reached 80%. Many times, demons remain undetected in the life of a person because prayers (solemn, minor exorcisms and prayers of liberation) that directly confront and expel them are never prayed. It is important to remember that the more a person is prepared spiritually and morally before an

exorcism session, the less also the occurrence of demonic manifestations in the body of the person. This should be remembered by charismatic groups that hold regular Life in the Spirit Seminars to lessen the demonic manifestations that usually occur in such situations (where there may be persons attending who may have 90% capacity of demons).

Interventions

"Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking off every yoke?"

—Isaiah 58:6

Specific Interventions

When I use the term interventions, what I mean are the specific ways by which our office (AMOE) responds to the needs of those who come to us due to extraordinary demonic harassments.

We will take, as our guide, the statistics from our office for the year 2014. During that entire year, 19% of our cases were cases of possession, 66% were that of oppression, 4% were that of obsession, and 12%, infestation. Some clarifications are in order:

1. Our infestation cases are small in number due to the fact that house infestations are usually referred to the parish priest who could do minor exorcisms. They have full spiritual authority over the homes of their parishioners. One does not need an exorcist to liberate a home from preternatural manifestations. We usually give guidelines to the parish priests to help them deal with the infestation. As a rule, the office only deals with cases that are unique or with severe manifestations.

2. Around 20% are cases of possession and this is where the office focuses most of its energies since only duly appointed exorcists can deal adequately with persons who are in this type of bondage.

3. As a rule, oppression cases do not need exorcists since the parish priest can do minor exorcisms over these cases; there is no need to perform solemn exorcisms. In AMOE, exorcists usually come into the picture if the case is too complex for the parish priest. We also take the case if the oppression has

reached a critical level sometimes almost similar to possession although the person is still more or less conscious when the demons take over his body. As of the present, since a number of parish priests have still little knowledge of extraordinary demonic activity, AMOE usually attends to oppression cases that may not be severe. Parish priests have to remember that around 90% of the cases that seek help from our office has a demonic element and therefore when a person in crisis is brought to the Church, they must not readily assume that the problem is merely psychological. They must always have on hand the prayers of liberation and minor exorcisms as well as the necessary sacramentals.

4. Cases of obsession are the smallest in number, being only 4%. If I would make a guess as to why, I would say that it is because obsession tends to be very similar to a psychological disorder, hence either the victim keeps quiet so that he may not be seen as crazy or if he opens up, he is immediately brought to psychological specialists.

The interventions we use in the ministry in dealing with cases of extraordinary demonic attacks are:

1. Solemn exorcism. Last year (2014), out of all the cases (possession, oppression, obsession, and infestation), a solemn exorcism was done by an exorcist in 39% of them.

Exorcism, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, takes place "when the Church asks publicly and authoritatively in the Name of Jesus Christ that a person or object be protected against the power of the Evil One and be withdrawn from his dominion" (n. 1673).

"Exorcism is directed at the expulsion of demons or to the liberation from demonic possession through the spiritual authority which Jesus entrusted to his Church" (n. 1673).

Fr. Francesco Bamonte, an exorcist of the diocese of the Pope and president of the International Association of Exorcists, stated in an interview, "Exorcism is a liturgical action and thus a prayer of the Church. The exorcist does nothing on his own behalf, but everything is in the name of Jesus Christ and the Church. When we see how much this rite disturbs the devil and the demons and defeats him, then we become aware of all the other liturgical actions of the Church and prayer and the grace they obtain as more powerful. That must really encourage us to pray, to make use of the sacraments, and to visit Holy Mass."[21]

2. Other prayers to expel spirits which include minor exorcisms and prayers of liberation. Last year, these types of prayers were used 45% of the time. Minor

exorcisms are prayers for expulsion of spirits that can only be used by priests. Some examples are the prayers of exorcism done within the present rite of Baptism and the exorcism prayers found in the old rite when admitting catechumens to the Church. Prayers of liberation are prayers to expel spirits which can be used by the religious and the lay faithful; they are more of prayers of supplication to God (deprecative) than prayers of command (imperative) to the demons.

3. Prayers of liberation to expel the spirits of divination that powers the "occult third eye." This type of prayer which is used for those who are sensitive to the preternatural world due to a demonic influence has been used in the previous year in 34% of our cases. This prayer may be used especially by all parish priests for those under their care; the parish priest must have minor exorcism prayers on hand in case there are negative reactions during the session.

4. Prayers for intergenerational liberation. These prayers which expel demons going down the generations due to ancestors who gave them rights over them can be prayed by all priests, the religious, and the lay faithful. These prayers must be used only over those persons under their spiritual authority. Last year, this type of prayer was used in 31% of our cases. Prayers of renouncement by the victim to destroy the rights of the demons over his family line must first be done before prayers for intergenerational liberation are said.

5. Inner healing prayers. This type of prayer focuses on healing emotional wounds, especially those causing deep sadness, intense anger, and unforgiveness, as well as extreme fears. When a case is grave in terms of trauma (which is usually the case when demons are already manifesting), some form of psychological intervention will be necessary like professional counseling or even medication that stabilizes the victim. These prayers can be used by the clergy, the religious, and the lay faithful.

6. Healing prayers. These prayers which could be prayed by all Catholics focus on physical and psychological (mental) healing. These prayers should not replace our duty to go to doctors and psychologists as well as psychiatrists when we become sick or are beset by a psychological disorder (which makes us dysfunctional). The medical establishment should always be seen as a gift of God to us; it is the normal means by which God grants us healing.

7. Spiritual counseling. I would define this type of intervention as a one-on-one accompaniment in faith between an exorcist or any of his team members with the victim (which may include the family). For me, this is one of the most essential interventions in bringing about liberation for the victim since this is where his interior disposition is revealed, purified, and properly developed. If

the interior disposition is lacking in the victim, the most faith-filled prayers of the exorcist and his team will not bring total liberation. Included in spiritual counseling is the need for the accompanying minister to listen, evangelize, console, challenge, inspire, and pray for the victim he is accompanying. Love and the other essential virtues necessary for the ministry and backed up with the proper training and skills are necessary to be a spiritual counselor.

What follows are the vision and mission statements of AMOE.

Vision and Mission of the Archdiocese of Manila Office of Exorcism

Vision Statement

We are persons called by God to form a community of faith through the Church for the Pastoral Ministry of Spiritual Liberation from demonic bondages and leading all towards integral holiness of life.

Mission Statements

It is AMOE's concern…

To create systems and procedures that provide efficient and effective pastoral services to respond to an increasing number of clients and cases.

To provide the necessary information and formation to develop competent, Christlike members.

To increase awareness of the ministry leading to a greater acceptance and participation by priests, the religious, and the laity.

As the director of AMOE, I have chosen the following words of Jesus to St. Faustina of the Divine Mercy as a continual reminder to the team of the essence of our ministry. The ministry of liberation encompasses corporal and spiritual acts of mercy towards those in need.

Our Lord's words: "…I demand from you deeds of mercy, which are to arise out of love for me. You are to show mercy to your neighbors always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to excuse or absolve yourself from it. I am giving you three ways of exercising mercy toward your neighbor: the first—by deed, the second—by word, the third—by prayer. In these three degrees is contained the fullness of mercy, and it is an unquestionable proof of love for Me. By this means a soul glorifies and pays reverence to My mercy."

"…Write this for the many souls who are often worried because they do not have the material means with which to carry out an act of mercy. Yet spiritual mercy, which requires neither permission or storehouses, is much more meritorious and is within the grasp of every soul. If a soul does not exercise

mercy somehow or other, it will not obtain My mercy on the day of judgment. Oh, if only souls knew how to gather eternal treasure for themselves, they would not be judged, for they would forestall My judgment with their mercy."

Assignments Given to Cases

The following are the general assignments that are given by AMOE to prepare a person for an exorcism session. Of course, since each case is unique, the given assignments and their emphasis will vary accordingly. What is important is that the assignments are done with the proper disposition.

1. General Confession
2. Attend Mass every day and receive Holy Communion
3. Renunciation of all occult involvements, sinful lifestyles, and vices
4. Offer Holy Masses for the protection and deliverance of the whole family
5. Fasting
6. The other sacraments when necessary, like Church Marriage (if living in sin), Anointing of the Sick, and Baptism (if still unbaptized)
7. Blessing of the place (residence) with prayers of deliverance by the parish priest
8. Proper use of sacramentals (holy water, exorcised oil and salt, St. Benedict's medal, scapular, blessed candles, etc.)

The St. Benedict's Medal "is a preventive against poison, pestilence, sorcery, and the attacks of the devil" (Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich).

9. Pray the Rosary every day with the whole family
10. Pray the Consecration Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary
11. Pray a novena prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary for protection, deliverance, and healing
12. Pray the Prayer to St. Michael and the Prayer for Protection (found in the *Catholic Handbook of Deliverance Prayers* by the author)
13. Get rid of all occult paraphernalia (amulets, talismans, *anting-anting, agimat, pangontra,* oils and medals from the *albularyos, oracions*, lucky charms, crystals, Buddha, other images of pagan gods, feng shui materials, pyramids, magnets, etc.)
14. Recommended readings based on the interview and narrative report.

I would like to add and emphasize the following:

1. The prayers should be done as much as possible together as a family or as a community.

"Be eager for more frequent gatherings for thanksgiving to God and His glory, for when you meet thus, the forces of Satan are annulled and his destructive power is cancelled in the concord of your faith" (St. Ignatius of Antioch).

"When people say the Rosary together, it is far more formidable to the devil than one said privately, because in this public prayer, it is an army that is attacking him" (St. Louis de Montfort).

I remember a case of infestation wherein the team was invited by members of a contemplative community to exorcise their convent. Among our many cases, this convent, I believe, had the least demonic presence and disturbances. We discovered why; the nuns prayed regularly the prayers of liberation as a community. Communities pray prayers of intercession, blessing, and healing but oftentimes they do not pray prayers that expel spirits from the surroundings, hence the more powerful spirits can remain unmolested for years in a locality.

In a recent news article,[22] the power of exorcisms done regularly by a group of priests in front of an abortion clinic in the United States manifested the power of deliverance prayers prayed as a community. It stated that when the priests first began their exorcism vigils, there was "noticed an immediate, dramatic decline in the numbers of mothers who go there for abortions." It further stated that "the number of abortions has reportedly been cut by half" at this clinic after a constant daily bombardment of prayers.

2. Devotion to the angels, especially one's guardian angel, is a very powerful aid in spiritual warfare that many tend to downplay. Having a devotion means not only having a public and personal relationship with them but also trying to imitate their angelic virtues in order to venerate them.

3. Devotion to one's patron saint. Getting to know more about him, praying to him, making him a model for one's life, and often calling upon him for aid is a very powerful help in growing in holiness.

"The saint whose name you bear is already assigned you from your Baptism" (St. Francis de Sales).

4. Removal and disposal of any object that has to do with connecting one with the cosmic/spiritual powers and energies in the universe. Be very discerning since some objects may be disguised as scientific when actually they are spiritual (occult) in nature. When an object is said to manipulate energies, one is already entering the world of the psychic and the occult.

   The danger of having an occult object is highlighted in the story of Judas

Maccabeus who waged a guerrilla war against Hellenism or the worship of the Greek gods, like Zeus, which was imposed on the Jews by Antiochus IV of Syria. In a battle against the military commissioner of Idumea, some of the Jews were killed and the reason was soon discovered.

"But under the tunic of each of the dead they found amulets sacred to the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. So it was clear to all that this was why these men had fallen" (2 Maccabees 12:40).

Let us never underestimate what occult objects can have over a Catholic. I remember once when I got harassed two nights in a row with diabolical nightmares which I knew were not from my unconscious but were spiritual in nature. I did not schedule any cases to attend to that time so I was wondering why I was getting harassed. Later, a seminarian approached me and told me that he had left some occult paraphernalia at the side of my door that had been used by a powerful occultist; he left them there so that I could dispose of them. I, for my part, did not know that such objects were there since I usually have a lot of things piled up by my door and what is more, the objects were covered. I told him that next time, he must first tell me if he was going to leave such things again at my door. My normal procedure in dealing with occult objects in such cases is, first, I would break the diabolical consecrations on the objects and cast out the demons connected with them and then before giving them to an AMOE team member for proper disposal, I would place exorcised salt over them. After exorcising and getting rid of the cursed objects left by the seminarian, I was able to return to my normal sleeping pattern.

A recent case of extraordinary demonic attack which caused quite a stir in the United States has brought certain insights on the ministry of liberation as can be seen through the following reports.

Exorcisms in Indiana reflect God's healing power[23]
by Patti Armstrong
National Catholic Register
A Service of EWTN

GARY, Ind. — The story of an Indiana family attacked by demons and freed by a Catholic priest through a series of exorcisms has stirred imaginations and curiosity. It also seems to confirm what many Catholics already know—evil is no match against the power that rests in the Church founded by Jesus Christ.

Most media accounts of the story have focused on the power of evil. But according to Fr. Vincent Lampert, designated exorcist for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, such news is highlighting the wrong thing.

"I keep waiting for the faith component to come out," he said. "There is too much focus on what evil is doing instead of what God is doing."

Fr. Lampert has an inside account of the Indiana exorcism story. Although he didn't perform the exorcisms, the priest was contacted by Fr. Mike Maginot, the priest who did. Fr. Maginot was looking for the advice of an experienced exorcist.

During three months of training in Rome in 2006, Fr. Lampert assisted in more than 40 exorcisms with longtime Italian exorcist Fr. Carmine De Filippis. He worked alongside Fr. Gary Thomas, whose experiences became the basis of the book The Rite: The Making of a Modern Exorcist and inspired the fictionalized movie.

Even though he always believed in the reality of evil, Fr. Lampert said he was surprised by some of what he saw in Rome.

"I saw someone levitate once," he said. "I saw foaming at the mouth, bodily contortions, superhuman strength, speaking in strange languages, and howling like wild animals."

"When someone is possessed, the demon is choosing to act in that body," said Fr. Lampert. "The prayers of exorcism are meant to call the demon forth. I focus on the prayers of the Church and power of Christ. A lot of people get caught up in the antics of the devil."

Fr. Lampert said there are around 50 trained exorcists in the United States. He acknowledged that reports of demonic activity seem to be increasing.

He added that there is a direct correlation with less religious faith and more involvement in the occult.

But is it possible for someone to be the victim of a curse, as was suspected in the Indiana case?

"The only way we allow a curse to be effective is not having on the armor of God," Fr. Lampert said. "If you are praying and relying on the power of God, that is much greater, so a curse will bounce right off."

Bishop David Kagan of the Diocese of Bismarck, N.D., explained that while all priests by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders have the power to exorcise demons, only some are designated officially by their bishop.

"Before an exorcism is done, there has to be an investigation to rule out other causes, such as mental or physical [causes]," he said. "We can't automatically be dismissive, but neither can we jump in."

When the bishop gives permission for an exorcism to proceed, Bishop Kagan said that the priest is acting in an official capacity with the authority of the Church.

"At the heart of it all for every priest, especially for one who is an exorcist, is the need for a strong and faithful prayer life," Bishop Kagan said. "We are dealing with Satan, and he is evil; but that does not mean he's not brilliant. We can never let our guard down with the devil."

Fr. Lampert pointed out that Pope Francis has continued the theme of strong faith, building on the fruits of the Year of Faith declared by Pope Benedict XVI.

Fr. Lampert noted that this message is especially important to young people.

"It's as if they are bored with God, so they lose faith or dabble in the occult," he noted of some youth. He advised parents to recognize their responsibility to be the number one educators of their children, teaching them about faith in order to protect them from evil.

Recent case in Indiana and famous occurrences behind the exorcist share lesson on power of sacraments[24]
By Michael H. Brown

It's as fascinating as it is tough to take: exorcism. It exists. There is absolutely no doubt about it. Extraordinary it is, how little it is spoken about from the pulpit. It demonstrates, as did a recent case that made headlines from Indiana, the reality of evil. But more than that—as in Indiana—it demonstrates the power of the Church, its priesthood, and the sacraments.

Especially interesting is how non-Catholics suddenly summon priests—so often ridiculed outside of the Church—when they come up against actual forces of darkness.

It's that stole, it's that book of rites, it's that sacrifice that effects deliverance in the most powerful, dangerous cases.

This was on display in the industrial town of Gary, Indiana (near Chicago) in the now widely publicized case whereby objects flew through the air, a youngster was thrown across a room, another levitated off a bed, and even doctors, paramedics, social workers, a psychiatrist, and nurses witnessed such extraordinary phenomena or sensations that they refused to return to a boy's bedside. Three children and their mother were afflicted. The local newspaper—no great believer in the supernatural—logged powerful testimony from credible professional witnesses who said at one point the boy even walked backwards up a wall, glided above head level, and did a back flip to land perfectly on the floor. There was a mysterious ooze, as in the Amityville Horror. There were flies. At first skeptical, police later called it "a portal to hell." Finally a priest, Fr. Mike Maginot from St. Stephen Martyr Church in Merrillville, was summoned and armed with St. Benedict crosses, holy water, plus blessed salt, brought the attack to an end with prayers of exorcism in English and Latin.

The lesson is less the existence of demons than the power of the sacraments—as was also demonstrated in the famous 1949 case of a Maryland boy known (to protect his privacy) as "Roland Doe," whose case was the basis for the 1973 Exorcist blockbuster (which for artistic purposes changed his gender to that of a girl).

An official Church case study we have reviewed indicates a series of incidents at least as terrifying and probably more powerful than those in the recent Indiana case—and likewise demonstrated the potency of what the Church offers us.

According to that study, holy objects, furniture, combs, hangers, and the boy

were moved or tossed about in a preternatural fashion—with the several priests involved in the case witnessing many of the phenomena for themselves (at least nine Jesuits were called in). The boy was constantly afflicted by deep scratches that spelled out words on his body.

The attacks often corresponded to the presence of holy objects—which clearly upset the force or forces of evil.

Prayers to Our Lady of Fatima were used to good effect in the famous Exorcist case.

This was a set of phenomena that included a mattress shaking for as long as two hours and the boy being violently tossed around in one case for more than two hours. The scratch or burn marks covered from hip to feet in one event.

But by and large, the sacraments proved decisive, as did prayers invoking the Archangel Michael.

Years ago, another priest involved in the case, Fr. Walter Halloran, now deceased, told us it was when Michael was brought into the picture and prayers were prayed that the demon or—after six weeks of solid warfare—finally left. The boy said he saw Michael.

Priests reciting their Office in a college chapel heard a loud boom and the chapel lit up at the exact same moment.

It is noteworthy that the boy's deliverance followed his Baptism into the Catholic faith and First Communion, conducted quickly for this specific emergency circumstance.

His mother and father also became Catholic, receiving their First Holy Communion on Christmas Day, 1950.

The following news items give us a glimpse of the ministry of liberation in other countries. These news items center on the course on exorcism that happened in the year 2014 in Rome.

Exorcism conference trains priests in "ministry of love"[25]
Catholic News Agency Daily News

Rome, Italy, May 13, 2014 / 08:03 pm (CNA/EWTN News).—For the ninth consecutive year, a group of experts met in Rome to train those interested in the ministry of exorcism—a rite hailed as a vital act of service in the Church today.

Participant Fr. Maximus Urbanowicz, a missionary priest from the Orthodox Church of America, described the practice as "a ministry of love" and "compassion, which requires great faith and virtue in those that are ministering to the people who are oppressed."

Fr. Urbanowicz told CNA on May 9 that he was very impressed with the conference's view of exorcism as a service, with "emphasis on loving people," as well as the structured process surrounding exorcism in the Catholic Church.

In his missionary work, the Orthodox priest often finds himself in countries

with pagan religions like "animism, where you see people who are oppressed or possessed by evil spirits."

He has had difficulty finding a "school, or experts that you can consult." Instead, he noted, "You kind of learn it by experience and watch others who have done it before you."

For Fr. Urbanowicz, the conference has helped him to think about things he "had never considered before: many cults and satanic symbols and different things which you don't really want to look at, but people are involved with it and you have to be able to meet them where they are in order to help them come out of it."

The Orthodox priest also expressed his appreciation for the Church's structural process for exorcism.

Catholics call for more exorcists to fight rise of Satanism[26]
Postmedia News
May 9, 2014

About 250 priests were trained as exorcists in Italy, but many more were needed, the conference organizers claimed.

"Just in the dioceses of Rome, around a third of calls that are received are requests for the services of an exorcist," said Fr. Cesar Truqui, a priest and exorcist from Switzerland and a member of the Legionaries of Christ, a conservative Catholic order.

In the popular imagination, exorcisms evoke images of black-clad priests holding aloft silver crucifixes while trying to rid frothing, wild-eyed victims of Satanic possession.

The Church tries to play down the more lurid associations but at the same time insists that the Devil exists and must be fought on a daily basis.

"Exploring the theme of demonic possession does not mean causing general paranoia, but creating awareness of the existence of the Devil and of the possibility of possession," Truqui told Vatican Radio.

Priests, medics, and scholars attend Rome exorcism course[27]
Discover Insights into Phenomenology and Satanism
ZENIT the world seen from Rome

Vatican City, May 8, 2014
"Satan has much power and wants to cause a lot of damage to God's people. However, Christ is risen and is all powerful. Therefore, with him, we do not need to fear anything from the enemy," says a priest from Haiti who has experienced, first-hand, those afflicted by demons.

Speaking to ZENIT at an annual Rome course on exorcism this week, Fr.

Louis Wesly Merosne from the Haitian diocese of Anse-a-Veau and Miragoane, said the course has shown him the need for ministers "(sic) who are willing to be used by the Lord in the work of exorcism and prayers of liberation.

"We need clarity on how to proceed, so that our tactics can be organized to have the greatest effect against the kingdom of evil," he said.

The course, entitled "Exorcism and Prayer of Liberation" and held at Rome's Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum, aims to offer priests and lay participants an opportunity to gain valuable tools for their pastoral work. It also tries to provide information and support to families affected by the phenomenon of magic, occultism, and Satanism.

Responding to how he felt the course could help priests, Fr. Merosne said: "First of all, don't be afraid. You not only have the power of your baptism, but that of your ordination. The devil is deathly afraid of you and only intimidates you to be afraid. So don't be afraid. Don't fall for that trick."

"Secondly," he stressed, "have recourse to the Blessed Mother. In my experience, praying the Rosary with someone or alone, with conviction, can be enough to cast out someone who is inflicted."

"Realize we have prayers we can do," he said. "Faith in the Lord and his power, through the mediation of the Church, is the power that casts out demons whether or not you are an exorcist."

He also stressed that since every priest has faith, power, and authority over certain souls to help them come closer to Christ, "his prayers should not be underestimated."

"Sometimes there are some happenings or facts that cannot be explained through medical or psychological data. That's the reason I am here," a medical doctor who wished to remain anonymous told ZENIT.

"If I look back over the years, I recall several people who partook in séances," he recalled. "Many years went by, and some of them had some real psychotic problems and distorted moral lives" which are even sometimes "extended to their children."

He said the course helped him, as it "confirmed my feeling that there are some sort of entry portals" to possession.

"In both my medical, and even personal life, I have seen there are triggers which can 'open the door to something,' " such as traumatic life experiences, like sexual abuse.

Since medications and psychological support are not sufficient, he said, "It is clear spiritual support is needed."

"It is important for us to follow the doctrine and discipline of the Catholic Church in all these delicate questions and to act in accordance with bishops and other Church authorities," said Fr. Don Pedro Barrajon, an exorcist and professor of theology at the Regina Apostolorum.

Discussing why this conference was needed, he said it was "born after a petition of Catholic priests, who were requested by people of their parishes or

communities to practice, in some cases, these rites but felt unprepared." They wanted to "have a more systematic knowledge of this topic."

"We wanted to offer a theological vision of what is the theology of angels and demons (that is the subject of my classes), the theology of exorcism and liberation's prayers," he said, adding that the course includes discussion of "Satanism, occultism, and other cultural phenomena that can induce a stronger action of the devil in people."

He said the course is designed so experts can delve into pharmacological, medical, psychological, and criminological phenomenon, as well as social, legal, biblical, canonical, and anthropological aspects.

Fr. David Salvatore, who spoke on canonical aspects of exorcism, told ZENIT that his goal for the conference was "to make known the laws of the Church, especially the theological dimension, so that exorcists and those who work in this ministry "can always work for the good, for the good of the spirit, and for the unity of the Church."

Case Studies

"They thought they were looking for you, Lord. But they found the Devil instead, who took on the appearance of an angel of light."

—St. Augustine

The following case studies stem mainly from AMOE's early cases (since I had planned to come out with this volume many years back and had already compiled these cases). All the cases are true although particulars have been changed for confidentiality and for the purpose of making them instructional. Each case represents different types of demonic contamination and harassment. It is important to see in each of the case, the openings, the varied and mounting manifestations, and the interventions that were done.

Case no. 1 — New Age

Victim — a 35-year-old man named Mario who is married and has one child

He was a minimalist Catholic who became interested in the New Age Movement because he sought answers to his psychic abilities. He was fascinated with the occult and desired to use it to have more control over his life and destiny. He began as a young man by attending Power of the Mind workshops (seminars on how to open your third eye and attract the positive energies of the universe) and reading of New Age books. He also started attending Eastern meditation sessions and learning alternative healing practices using energies, magnets, and crystals. He developed his psychic abilities like healing and started healing the minor ailments of his close relatives. He also practiced astral projection (travel) visiting faraway places and friends; he would recount to his very surprised friends what they had been doing during the nights of his visitations. The friends who were also nominal Catholics were usually alone in their homes.

Later, he started hearing footsteps and noises in his house without any seen

cause, especially after Eastern meditation practices which included the chanting of mantras. He started seeing the so-called auras around people. He started also to have the ability to "feel" the emotions and the physical pains of others. He learned to shield himself from negativity and psychic attacks by placing himself, in his mind's eye, in a bubble of white light. Later, the desire to heal others and the earth through energies manipulated through visualization techniques became an obsession. There were times when he had the sensation of feeling that half of his body was cold while the other half was hot. But with all these psychic and occult abilities, Mario discovered to his dismay that his joy in life was quickly seeping away and that he experienced no more meaning in life; he then began to have obsessive suicidal thoughts.

As his psychic occult powers grew, he had difficulty concentrating and could not complete his advance studies in a certain university even after many months. He began to have very painful headaches and also vertigo. Stomach aches and strong palpitations in his chest also occurred.

His Catholic faith deteriorated more and more. He became convinced that God is part of everything (Pantheism) due to his New Age readings as well as his experiences when he would enter altered states of consciousness through New Age "meditation." He also began to believe in reincarnation. He did not anymore believe in the existence of hell and sin. He also believed that good and evil should coexist. He later came to accept that Jesus is merely one of the ascended masters equal to Buddha and other so-called more evolved personalities. The Mass held no more meaning for him and he only felt dryness when attending as well as when he tried to pray. The sacrament of Reconciliation was not anymore important to him. His conscience by this time had become dull and was basically dead.

He started to have dreams where a spirit would come regularly to him at night and during his siesta time to tell him that it was a romantic partner. Once, when he fell asleep, the spirit spoke to his wife using his lips, verbally threatening her that she should leave him. It also did violence to his wife, manifesting intense jealousy; when he awoke, he had no recollection of what occurred. The spirit also started to rape him at night, even leaving physical marks of the attack; it would sometimes begin the attack by paralyzing him so that he could not move a muscle. These were truly terrifying moments for Mario.

Once when he visited a beautiful church, through the coaxing of his family, he started to receive supposed locutions and visions. He experienced "Jesus" talking to him and begging him to assist him in cleansing souls in preparation for the second coming. He also started to receive messages from "Mama Mary." Within only a short span of time, he was able to gather around him a following; these were Church people who believed his messages were from heaven. The voices were also telling him to heal; other messages pertained to the end of the world but these messages did not bring him peace, only fear and trepidation. The messages also commanded him to do certain activities like pilgrimages and

prayer sessions with others and warned him that if they were not done, he would experience certain punishments. Aside from his other occult activities, he also did automatic writing, believing that he was being used by a good spirit; his growing followers collected these writings, believing that they came from God. When he was alone and would force himself to sit still and try to pray, he would hear other unearthly voices; he later began to talk to "souls."

God intervened in the life of Mario when he was inspired to seek help from his parish priest to discern his many locutions and visions; but immediately after the first interview, he experienced very painful psychic attacks. He experienced demonic harassments at night; dark entities would try to kill him through strangulation. They would also press down on his chest so that he would have a hard time breathing and only prayers to God ended these psychic attacks. He started to hear voices condemning him that there was no way out. Other psychic attacks like the feeling of being swallowed by a snake occurred at night with greater and greater frequency. Due to these and other psychic attacks, he was not able to return to his parish priest. He finally had a nervous breakdown and was about to be institutionalized for psychosis. Yet at this time, his mind had not totally deteriorated. The parish priest, hearing about the grave condition of Mario, contacted the Archdiocese of Manila Office of Exorcism. Interviews were set up between AMOE and the relatives of Mario.

AMOE gave immediately the following assignments before the exorcism session: offer Masses for Mario's liberation and his protection. Included here was protection for his family and possessions. Family prayer was to be started immediately. Renouncement and confession of all New Age practices and beliefs. Although the renouncement and confession caused Mario a lot of bodily pain, enlightenment of his conscience was received right after. Other assignments included getting rid of all his occult paraphernalia like talismans, amulets, crystals, magnets, and the like, and using the sacramentals with the proper disposition.

His group of New Agers had psychic knowledge of the planned exorcism session and were adamant in getting Mario back to their fold, seeking him out. But circumstances were such that this was to no avail.

During the exorcism session, he went into a state of crisis (he had no recollection afterwards which points to the reality that Mario was a walking possessed). He started to "dance" and mimic Eastern meditation postures and movements. Even with eyes closed, he could find his way around the room (the room had chairs). Also with eyes closed, he showed aversion to the sacred and tried to turn away from the relics of the saints placed before his face.

"All the martyrs are to be honored by us, but especially those whose relics we possess. They assist us by their prayers; they preserve us as to our bodies in this life, and receive us when we depart hence" (St. Maximus of Turin).

"We do not worship, we do not adore, for fear that we should bow to the

creature rather than to the creator, but we venerate the relics of the martyrs in order to better adore him whose martyrs they are" (St. Jerome).

He once tried to hit the exorcist with eyes closed but his fist was blocked by an unseen force and could not connect with the exorcist. During the session, there were times when he became conscious since he remembered the intense pain he felt in his eyes while prayers against the occult were being said; he felt that they were burning (a sign that he had been spiritually blinded) so much so that he was crying out in pain. There was violence, shouting, convulsions, and facial contortions in the person interspersed with the "dancing." At the end of the session, he started vomiting a whitish substance. A number of exorcism sessions had to be done for Mario with each one having lesser and lesser violent manifestations.

After-action report: after a few months, he was able to complete his doctorate, the confusion in his mind ended as well as all his psychic powers, visions, locutions, and his automatic writing. Mario returned to the sacraments and now lives more authentically his Catholic faith.

Other aids: he was later asked to do a consecration of all his faculties to the Lord in front of the Blessed Sacrament to permanently protect his psychic faculties; reading again the basic teachings of the Church; regular prayers of protection and guidance in discernment to Mama Mary. Before the exorcism session, he had been sent to a psychiatrist to stabilize and aid in diagnosis; permission from the psychiatrist was also sought before the exorcism sessions began.

During this time, AMOE had not yet started to use the prayers against the spirit of divination that powers the occult third eye which would have been used since Mario had used the occult to become more psychic. This would have facilitated the liberation of Mario; but all things are ultimately under divine providence and God works within our limitations.

Case no. 2 — Folk Religiosity

Victim — a 17-year-old girl named Norma

Although she was baptized a Catholic, she was also a member of a pagan/animist cult in a faraway province. Her 70-year-old father was a powerful witch doctor/faith healer and was also the head of the pagan/animist cult. He used to go into altered states of consciousness which we may call shamanistic trance states and would become stronger in his occult powers every full moon. He used so-called "white magic" to make people cordial and friendly towards Norma. Norma, as she was growing up, was being trained by her father to become the next witch doctor/shaman of the pagan cult. Now, Norma had the occult ability to easily hypnotize people who were psychic. This pagan tribe in the province had, of course, an animal guardian spirit as the source of its power and whom

the tribe worshipped and placated through rituals and blood offerings.

Coming to Manila to study, Norma rented a dormitory space in a boarding house run by a religious congregation. Externally, she seemed like any normal student. But since she arrived, many sicknesses started to occur and relationships among the boarders began deteriorating. A person, coming from a nearby tribe from Norma's and who knew about the secret powers of Norma, started to get sick and had terrible headaches that caused her to scream in pain; she was also vomiting and frequently hysterical. Later, a black stone (cursed object) was found in the pillow case of this person. Those who lived in the boarding house suspected that Norma was the cause of the pain so they resorted to faith healers for help. A third boarder who discovered the secret powers of Norma also started to get sick. It would seem that Norma or the spirits within her did not like that her occult powers be known to others. The lay administrator in charge of the boarders also started to feel stabbing pains, dizziness, and gas pains. The normal areas where demonic spirits attack are the head and stomach areas as well as the spine area (including the lower back). Heaviness in the shoulders is also, in my own experience, a secondary area of attack.

With the arrival of Norma, most of the boarders started to hear voices calling them but couldn't see anyone. Worms started appearing in certain rooms of the boarding house. When she would get angry at anyone, that person would immediately get sick. At night, those in the dormitory would see an animal (usually a snake) accompanying her. Sometimes when boarders would see her at night, half of her body would be that of an animal (usually a snake). Others would see her shadow shaped like that of an animal. She would also be seen in two places at the same time. Wherever she would be, the smell of cigarette smoke would also be smelled. Things around her would appear and disappear, and sacred objects in her dorm were desecrated like the crucifix in the room being turned upside down. All this, of course, brought overwhelming terror and confusion to those who witnessed them.

The religious sisters in charge of the dormitory testified also to these manifestations since all of them had one way or the other witnessed preternatural phenomena. They were very much alarmed and did not know how to address what was going on. It had reached a point that all the boarders were terrified of Norma because of the many paranormal manifestations that occurred when she was present. Even new boarders and newly assigned sisters started to have fear of her due to their own personal experiences of a paranormal nature around her. A few times, boarders would catch Norma lighting black candles (which is used for cursing one's enemies by sending a demon against that person). Many boarders started to leave due to sicknesses and out of intense anxiety and fear. Other boarders started to leave the boarding house because of dread that if they do not do what she wanted, they would get sick as was the case with the other boarders.

The sisters started to use the sacramentals of the Church. When they secretly

placed exorcised salt in some of the common rooms, Norma would immediately leave and never enter again that particular place. When blessed incense was used to purify the dorms, Norma could not stand the fumes of burnt incense and left the place. When the sisters together with the boarders prayed a prayer of deliverance, Norma covered her ears, shrieked, and started to convulse. Later, the sacramentals placed in her dormitory would be found thrown away.

The sisters brought Norma to our office (AMOE) in order to be interviewed. She agreed because she did not want to be asked to leave the boarding house. Although she shared about her powers to a few boarders to make them fear her and to threaten them, she denied all of these during the interview. She only mentioned a few occult practices and experiences that she did and had. During the interview, as discussion began to center on the sinfulness and dangers of pagan practices, Norma started silently mumbling incantations so that she would not be affected by what she was hearing. But when she was suddenly brought to the chapel with the Blessed Sacrament, she started to tremble and wanted to get out of the chapel. The sisters told the exorcist that when Norma would be brought to the church, she always held a black stone inside her pocket (so as not to be affected and react). Norma had some form of knowledge when the sisters would make plans, even secretly, regarding her.

It is a norm that (AMOE) does not exorcise when the person is not willing to be exorcised; neither is an exorcism done when a person is uncooperative and not transparent. Looking back, why I decided to go on with the exorcism was the fact that she seemed very sincere and willing, and I wanted to give her the benefit of the doubt; her nontransparency could have been caused by a spirit that either blinded her or was blocking her to cooperate. Hopefully, the exorcism would expel these spirits to make her more open to being helped.

But when the team decided to schedule an exorcism session, it seemed that she prepared herself for it through occult rituals because there was no reaction whatsoever on her part; there was no demonic manifestation. An “ambush” exorcism session was scheduled: an unannounced session wherein even the sisters did not know when it would occur and only find out on the day itself. The reason was so that Norma would not be able to prepare herself using occult rituals.

The ambush session arrived. Since she was not warned that there would be a pray-over session and had not prepared beforehand with incantations, having a talisman and the like, she immediately reacted.

She became violent and hysterical; she lost consciousness. She strangled herself and slithered like a snake on the floor. She pulled her hair and beat herself. She possessed extraordinary strength and needed many to hold her down even though she was a frail girl. Her body was catatonic most of the time. She was able to bend backwards, her body forming an arch with only her head and feet touching the ground. When she opened her eyes, only the whites would appear. She could “see” blessed objects even with her eyes closed and would

react to them. She reacted the most to the third part of the rite of exorcism which is against spirits of the occult. She expelled spirits through the mouth, especially by coughing. She felt excruciating pain when exorcised salt and oil were placed on her. She screamed, "*Ayoko na!*" She could not drink holy water, only ordinary water. After the session, she became fresh and strong and felt relieved. She had no recollection of what took place.

Yet when confronted with the facts of her possessed state and the dangers of the occult as well as the need to be honest to the team in order to be helped, she again denied any dealings with the occult. Since it was then clear that she had made up her mind not to be helped, it was decided that it would be useless to exorcise Norma again. A general rule for an exorcist is this: he must not exorcise someone when it is clear that the person does not desire it. AMOE gave its assessment and recommendations to the sisters in charge of Norma and left to them the decision of what to do with her. Norma, fearing that she would be asked to leave, gave a threat to the sisters that if ever she would be expelled from the dormitory, the sister in charge of the dorm would die. Of course, demonic black magick has no effect on a person close to God and Mama Mary. She was given an ultimatum for the sake of the other boarders and for the sake of her soul; she remained obstinate in keeping and developing her occult pagan powers. The sisters brought the case to the higher authorities in their congregation before finally deciding in carrying out their ultimatum. She was then asked to leave. Her threat of cursing and killing the sister in charge, of course, was ineffective.

The exorcism team then went to exorcise and bless the boarding house; the team discerned that the concentration of preternatural activity in the place was centered on the things she had given to others as well as the places she frequented. The team asked the sisters to light blessed candles in the infested locations and the boarders to throw away the gifts received from her. These days, we would have exorcised these objects first and then disposed of them.

After the exorcism and blessing, all preternatural manifestations and all sicknesses ended. Fear was replaced by peace and joy. There was a deeper religiosity among the boarders and they stopped leaving.

If Norma were to seek help from the office today and found to be sincere and cooperative, the following would be the general process of how AMOE would help her. First, she would be advised to do the renouncement of all occult beliefs and practices (and the spirits connected to them), confession especially of the occult, daily Masses as well as Masses offered for her total liberation, continued protection and growth in her spiritual life, a devotion and a sincere consecration to Mama Mary, frequent renewal of baptismal promises to break fully the demonic consecrations that were done on her and by her, and the use of the sacramentals. Next would be for her to undergo intergenerational liberation prayers which expel the demonic occult spirits handed down from her ancestors. Then exorcism sessions which would be preceded by prayer for the breaking of

seals and consecration to the evil spirits, especially the ancestral guardian spirit (head demon of the family) and the breaking of unholy ties with the father. Someone from AMOE would be assigned to properly evangelize and journey with her.

After leaving the boarding house run by the sisters, the following was learned: the administrators of the boarding house where Norma next transferred to had sought assistance from the sisters because the same manifestations that occurred in the boarding house run by the religious also started occurring in their place. But to avoid the help of the sisters, Norma changed her religion. Now she enters into the possessed state regularly; she once became comatose for five days in a catatonic state. In this last boarding house where she stayed, all the boarders have left. This case has still to be resolved. God infinitely loves each and every one of us and has given us free will to respond to this love; we can therefore say no to the invitations of God's love and therefore block this love from entering into our lives and transforming us. God will never force anyone to love him since mutuality is integral to love.

Note: Judas was an apostle who was later possessed by the devil; the other apostles did not realize that there was a walking possessed in their midst and only Jesus knew this sad fact. Now, the question is this: why did Jesus not exorcise Judas? Because Judas had made his choice to belong to the devil; he had Infinite Goodness and Absolute Truth in the Person of Jesus in front of him, and he still made the choice to be his enemy.

Case no. 3 — Cults

Victim — a seven-year-old girl named Sheila

Sheila was a seven-year-old girl studying in a public school in Manila. She had many friends and because of her good looks many boys in the school had a crush on her. She was also the teacher's favorite because she is intelligent, charming, well-mannered, and friendly. She was later bullied by some others from the school because of envy and jealousy. She was active in the parish, serving as a member of the choir.

Sheila had her first paranormal experience at school; it began when the school started constructing a new wing to their main building.

She saw a "boy" seemingly speaking to a nearby tree; the "boy" then turned around to look at her and then suddenly disappeared. This was the beginning of a living nightmare for her. On another occasion, she saw a huge dark figure in the form of a man. Sometimes she would see a huge dark mass that would be in the form of black smoke. During those sightings, she would start to have goose bumps, then she would begin to feel her shoulders becoming heavy. She would usually see these dark figures when she was in the school's comfort room. Later, she started to have more frightening experiences with the preternatural world.

Where before she only saw single entities, this time she started to see families of ghosts and they were very angry and seeking revenge (they would communicate this message to her telepathically). They were very angry because the new wing of the building was being built exactly where they supposedly "lived."

These paranormal manifestations were not witnessed by Sheila alone since also a teacher and some students had their own particular preternatural experiences. Even the principal had an experience; he once saw a man resting his head on a teacher's table and then he suddenly disappeared.

Later, without any Church intervention, the extraordinary manifestations escalated. Sheila began experiencing rigidity of her limbs when she felt and saw any of the many spirits manifesting. It reached a point that when she would sense them near her, she would lose consciousness. Later, the extraordinary attacks escalated to a terrifying degree; the spirits started to possess Sheila, making her fall into violent convulsions. She had to stop schooling when the possession attacks started.

Instead of seeking help from the Church, the parents of Sheila brought her to an occult specialist. The faith healer *(albularyo*) who was consulted told Sheila to appease the spirits by offering food to them. She was instructed to place these appeasement offerings in front of a tree that was near the school. Sheila did not reply nor did she want to have anything to do with this occultist; the reason was that while she was in the presence of this specialist, Sheila could see varied spirits attached to this person. The family did what the occultist demanded from them but the psychic attacks on Sheila only became worse.

The family also sought help from a spiritist group that sort of adopted her to their group because of her strong psychic abilities. The head of the spiritist group was a family friend. During the attacks, the spiritist group would try to calm her by using their magick wands on her. Later, having been made aware of the psychic potentials of Sheila, this spiritist group began teaching her magick/ sorcery in order for her to become one of them. Sheila was attracted to the use of the magick wands by the spiritists and also their other activities; she believed that they were of God. It would only be much later that she would discover that the group was not of the kingdom of God. She had become part of a cult.

Cults are experts in brainwashing. They have a way of bombarding a person with affirmations called "love bombing," which makes the victim more and more emotionally dependent on the cult. They would also usually target the ego of the victim saying to the person, "You are very special and God has a special mission for you!" Cults know the needs of human nature and use this knowledge to weaken the identity of the victim to manipulate his needs as well as presenting themselves as the only answer to these needs. Aside from other brainwashing techniques, occult spirits are present to solidly seal the bondage between the victim and the cult.

Through the spiritist group, Sheila developed her psychic abilities and occult powers which improved her ability to psychically communicate with the spirit

world. She became so psychic that she could this time see the unclean spirits right before they would enter her body to possess her. She also learned to diagnose sicknesses psychically. Other psychic and occults powers that she gained and developed were fortune-telling and telepathy; but this time she had great difficulty even entering the church. During Mass, she would get angry and verbally attack the priest, especially during consecration.

There came a time when the spiritist group could not anymore control the manifestations of the possessing spirits through their magick wands and Sheila experienced two weeks of continuous possession attacks. With the grace of God, the parents of Sheila came to their senses and sought help from their parish priest who in turn sought the assistance of our office (AMOE).

After the needed preparations were accomplished, an exorcism was performed on her. The following manifestations occurred: tremors (shaking of her legs), convulsions, and passing out; her voice would change to that of a male and she used foul language as well as cursing. She had to be restrained; she exhibited extraordinary strength needing around five men to pin her down. She was laughing very loudly, even saying to her parents, *"Hindi ko pababayaang mapunta sa inyo ang batang ito.*" She also displayed violent self-destructive behaviors of strangling and hitting herself.

During the exorcism session, there was much use of oil since the unclean spirits seemed to particularly hate it; they couldn't stand the scent of the oil, so they were screaming, "*Ang baho!*" She would also turn away from the crucifix even when her eyes were closed. The exorcism session did not last very long. Sheila had no recollection afterwards of what transpired which is a sign that the person was not merely being oppressed but was totally possessed.

After the session, she had some body pains and was quite weak. The next day, she still had these pains. Sheila's sister prayed over her from the heart using the prayer of deliverance and the Rosary; Sheila then had a vision of St. Michael with a long sword who struck the devil, and the spirit tormenting her left her. Today, she is again a normal girl (she lost all her occult powers and all demonic attacks stopped) and has returned to school, although she entered another school to avoid gossip. After many years, she visited the office just a few weeks ago. She and her family were migrating abroad and they passed by to thank again the office for liberating her from the extraordinary attack of possession.

Assignments given to her were the following: the use of sacramentals (holy water, exorcised salt, and exorcised oil), renouncement of occult activities and affiliation with the spiritist group, avail herself of the sacrament of Reconciliation, and attending Mass.

If we were to handle the case today, I would have recommended the prayers to expel the spirits of divination which empowers the occult third eye, consecrating her psychic abilities to God through Mama Mary as well as an exorcism and blessing in the school since the triggering event for Sheila was encountering what we call elementals or nature spirits (territorial demonic spirits

attached to objects of nature).

Case no. 4 — Victim of a Curse

Victim — a five-year-old boy named Dante

Dante was a normal growing-up boy: talkative, friendly, talented, and an above-average student. His difficulties all started when he went to an outing with his father. The outing, unknown to his mother, was with the mistress of his father. The father had an ongoing affair with this woman which his wife had no inkling about. The mistress of the father, having knowledge of witchcraft, stole an item of Dante and later on sent a curse to the boy.

Immediately, Dante became "autistic"; he couldn't speak and didn't seem to understand what was going on around him. He grew withdrawn and seemed to have no more mental connection with the outside world. He acted strangely to those around him. He would cry every middle of the night. He would also cover his eyes as if he was seeing something frightful whenever he would go to bed. Many times, from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. he would either become violent or experience *bangungot*. At 4:00 a.m., if he were still asleep, he would suddenly wake up and spit at everyone present.

He would also be seen covering his eyes during the day as if he were seeing something horrible. When walking outside, he would constantly glance backwards while covering his eyes as though he were being followed.

He would often be seen playing with an "imaginary friend." At other times, he would be seen laughing and joking as if with someone and then very suddenly burst out crying. Even if he were not told anything, he always knew if his parents were planning to bring him to a church. He would always be afraid inside the sacred confines of a church. Stomach aches and headaches would be experienced by Dante during the Mass. He was also afraid of the statues of saints.

The mistress, who was a witch, was seen also going around the home doing incantations. When the mistress would call the father on the phone and the father would avoid speaking to her, Dante would immediately become possessed by evil spirits and become violent. It became worse when the father decided to end the affair; the mistress had threatened that she would curse the boy with even greater curses unless the father would leave his wife and son and live with her.

Dante didn't anymore eat like a normal boy; he would not eat rice anymore. He would also drink his own urine and eat his own stool. Intolerable body pains suddenly started when the father tried to end the affair with his mistress; very severe headaches, chest pains, and stomach aches occurred, that Dante had to be rushed again and again to the hospital. The strange thing was that all the doctors

could not find any physical cause. Medicines also had no effect to alleviate his pains in any way. Deterioration of the body of Dante also occurred; he started becoming thinner and thinner over time even though he was eating adequate food. He had to stop schooling because of the "autism," psychic attacks, and the frequent sicknesses.

The family started to bring him to faith healers and spiritists but no faith healer and spiritist was able to heal him; they also said that their powers were too weak to help Dante. The family was losing trust in God. A religious sister whom they consulted advised that they read the book on exorcism by Fr. Syquia. Dante suddenly became wild with rage when the parents secretly (the parents made sure Dante didn't know anything about this) made an appointment with AMOE. The mother brought the boy to the office and he had a huge bruise because he reacted violently to their coming to the office. During the first interview and subsequent appointments, when the exorcist would be arriving in the office, Dante, even without any way of knowing, would know beforehand and block the door to the office. He did this by lying down across the threshold of the doorway. When holy water was added secretly to his drink, he would react violently.

Assignments given to the family were: use of the sacramentals like holy water (blessing with the sign of the cross each night by the mother on the forehead of the child), exorcised salt around the room of the boy, and wearing of the scapular and a St. Benedict's medal although these would always be found removed or destroyed. Parents were asked to renounce and confess bringing the boy to faith healers and spiritists. The father was also asked to decisively fix his family life. The father was seen to have difficulty permanently cutting off his affair with the witch. Forgiveness also for the witch was asked of the parents.

The exorcism was scheduled. The following occurred during the session: Dante was quiet during the opening prayers, but when prayers of expulsion were said, even though the boy could not understand the words, he immediately became violent. Cutting of curses was done during the session. When the exorcist priest prayed only with his mind, especially to Mama Mary, Dante knew and reacted violently to these silent prayers. Dante was "burned" by any sacred medals and objects (especially the relics of the saints) placed on him. He especially could not stand exorcised oil which "burned" him. He would react the most to the third prayer in the Roman Ritual of Exorcism which was against the spirits of the occult. Included in the session was the consecration of the entire family to Jesus and Mama Mary. After an hour, the session ended; Dante, after the first session, started to return to normalcy. His mind started functioning again and all his bodily pains ended.

Later, a charismatic priest prayed over the boy to close his psychic faculties and he became less psychic or sensitive to the spirit world. In front of the Blessed Sacrament, Dante was asked to offer (consecrate) his psychic faculties to God. Future sessions brought more liberation to Dante. Protection prayers

were also prayed against future curses from the witch. Dante regained his former healthy demeanor and started to return to his normal healthy size. His "autism," though, did not entirely disappear. The effect of the curse had caused some real damage to the functioning of the boy's mind. What helped a lot was when the father broke up with his mistress who was a witch, and the entire family prayed and went to the sacraments together.

I would like to note that when evil spirits have been attached too long to a person, causing serious extraordinary demonic attacks, some permanent psychological damage may occur so much so that even if the spirits have all been expelled, the damage would still have to be treated by psychiatrists. Immediate intervention is therefore crucial. An example would be a person undergoing severe oppression; it could reach a critical point wherein the person has a nervous breakdown or has a psychic break with reality. It is known that many persons contaminated by the occult end up in mental hospitals. Children are especially vulnerable due to the fact that their psyche are still fragile.

This case of Dante was one of my very early cases in the ministry, where I still had a lot to learn many things. Also at that time, AMOE still had no case officers to journey and properly follow up cases.

Case no. 5 — Infestation

Place — a novitiate house for a particular religious congregation located in a province in the north

This religious community had 23 novices and three professed sisters who were in charge. In the huge and beautiful convent, where young novices were being formed, there started occurring a lot of preternatural manifestations.

When the sisters sought help from our office (AMOE), they reported the following early manifestations: objects were seen to move by themselves; or objects suddenly disappeared and were never found; or objects disappeared and reappeared later but in other locations. Many of the novices and even the sisters experienced these phenomena and they were perplexed. They seemed to have no idea that demons could manipulate any material object; since the demons were pure spirits, they had a certain power over matter. When we dug deeper to seek the cause of such disturbances, we found out from the sisters that the convent used to be a mass graveyard and before that, tribal pagan practices had been performed in the location.

But the paranormal/preternatural harassments became worse after the novices started practicing pranic healing, crystal healing and energy healing, through different seminars given to them. Here we again see how the New Age Movement has infiltrated the Church itself. The sisters had no idea that these types of healing are not the supernatural healing that comes from God. They were not aware that these types of healing used either psychic powers, occult

powers, or a combination of both, hence these are very dangerous to the spiritual life. Prayer was never used in these seminars but occult visualization techniques. And when the paranormal activities increased, instead of seeking help from the Church, the community sought out occult practitioners and psychic mediums for "discernment" of what was taking place as well as to help resolve the increasing preternatural disturbances.

It was a case of ignorance since in their province it was normal to turn to occult practitioners for aid when these types of phenomena occurred; their ancestors had been doing this for centuries. It did not enter their minds that since they are now Catholics, Jesus should have been their only recourse. True liberation and divine healing can only come from Jesus who is God and not from the preternatural world of the fallen angels who can only give temporary benefits and whose price is a right over those who make use of their services.

I would take this opportunity to quote Evagrius Ponticus, an influential early Church figure within Christian monasticism. His statement can be applied to a person who seeks assistance from occult practitioners when he is beset with spirit world problems like, for example, when one is retaliated upon by an elemental because he cut down a tree that it inhabited. He states, *"You should be aware of this trick: at times the demons split into two groups; and when you call for help against one group, the other will come in the guise of angels and drive away the first, so that you are deceived into believing that they are truly angels."*

Returning to our case, spiritists therefore came and conducted séances in the convent! Some of the occult and New Age practitioners recommended *padugo* to appease the spirits and the use of amulets and talismans (*anting-anting*) which, of course, only worsened the manifestations. The sisters also ate food and drank drinks that had incantations done over them; these were given to them by the occult practitioners. Very sadly, some of those who got sick went to more occult specialists (faith healers/*albularyos*) for healing. This community knew about God but not of his loving power that is always there for the asking. Their concept of God was pagan in disposition; they believed in him but more in the abstract sense and not in any day-to-day practical manner.

The manifestations, of course, intensified and moved to a critical level; the emotional, psychological, relational, and spiritual lives of the sisters were all affected. There began a lack of harmony among the community members. Extreme emotional and mental changes in the novices and the sisters came about like depression, withdrawal, paranoia, suspicion, and hostility. These occurrences were uncharacteristic of the community. Dryness or the absence of consolations as well as unnatural fatigue became the norm during prayer times.

There were more terrifying manifestations and these occurred at night. There began disturbed sleep, terrible nightmares, persons waking up in the middle of the night and seeing black entities and gigantic birds in their rooms. Knocking, pounding, and banging on the hallway were heard at midnight. One could only

imagine the confusion and dread that these sisters faced when night fell.

There were even more horrifying manifestations to come. Growling and scratching sounds were heard at 3:00 a.m. along the corridors outside the novices' rooms. Knocking and ringing of doorbells at night also occurred without anyone outside the door of the house or the rooms. There were foul odors (a sign of the demonic) which had no visible source.

The manifestations during the day also intensified. Many of the sisters saw dark shadows and weird-looking creatures around the formation house, especially in the dark corners of the huge convent and also in the toilets. It is known that demons have a propensity to manipulate electricity. There began in the convent electrical appliances turning on and off by themselves even when they were unplugged (example, blender, organ, refrigerator, lights). In addition, liquids would suddenly appear on the walls and floors of the formation house. There would also be sudden and radical changes in temperature within the convent.

Many of the novices experienced wind blowing within their enclosed (all windows and doors were closed) rooms. They usually had eerie feelings of being watched when they were all alone. Many heard voices without anyone being there, and some of the novices and sisters heard their names being called by an unseen male entity. A few saw "doubles" of certain sisters (seeing a sister at one place when in reality, she is in another place).

The attacks at night escalated to terrifying proportions of oppression. When night came, the sleeping novices and sisters began to experience invisible sexual assaults: touching, molesting, scratching, and biting. Some novices experienced being strangled at night and were released only after they prayed. There was also the shaking of the beds of some of the novices. Physical assaults of oppression not only occurred during the night but sometimes also during the day such as punching, scratching, biting, hair pulling, etc. from unseen entities.

Some novices started to have rashes which no medicine could cure; once, one novice's eyes turned totally black. This novice had an ancestral spirit (many family generations practiced witchcraft). The novices who were attacked the most were those with unhealed traumatic experiences which the spirits latched on to, those who had gone many times to faith healers (*albularyos*), and those who practiced some form of Eastern meditation like yoga.

Once, a black man was seen walking along the corridors of the convent which was impossible since no one aside from the sisters lived within the convent walls; as one of the sisters ran after the man, he or, we, may say it, suddenly turned into a creature with wings and went out of the window. There was also the sighting of big dogs that could pass through walls when they were chased. Outside in the garden, there were sightings of elementals like dwarves as well as a white lady. The dogs which the sisters kept would also growl at invisible entities many times during the day when normally before, they were peaceful and quiet.

At long last, when nothing seemed to work, the religious community turned to the Church; the sisters could not take it anymore. Before they contacted the office, they asked a priest to bless the convent. But because there were already so many spirits present due to the many occult rituals that were done, the moment he entered the door, the spirits had the power to throw things at him which made him leave the novitiate immediately.

When the sisters in the novitiate house finally called the office (AMOE) for help, the demonic activity increased all the more. This is normal since evil spirits would do everything possible to frighten and in a sense threaten so as to block those whom they are victimizing from continuing to seek help from the Church. Like bullies and terrorists, they would tend to use harassments and terror tactics.

The office made the following initial interventions and gave the following assignments: interview of everyone regarding the manifestations; a four-day retreat and seminar to prepare for the exorcism of the place and persons; mutual forgiveness of one another; getting rid of all occult objects given to the community and keeping away from all New Age and pagan/animist practitioners; use of sacramentals such as holy water, exorcised salt, blessed oil, the scapular, and the St. Benedict's medal; renouncement and confession of all occult activities, especially the diabolical consecrations done by the sisters; and finally, Masses for the liberation of the place and the protection of all those concerned, including their loved ones and possessions.

On the day of the exorcism, three exorcists and three support volunteers with the necessary charisms went to exorcise the place. Firstly, Mass was celebrated for the deliverance of the place and the protection of all those concerned, including loved ones and possessions. Then followed the breaking of the pagan consecrations like the *padugo* that was done on the place, followed by the consecration of the place to God. Next was exorcising and then blessing all locations using the different sacramentals for the expulsion of unclean spirits (holy water, exorcised salt, blessed oil, and blessed incense). Sisters who were victims of greater diabolical psychic attacks were given individual sessions of deliverance. During the exorcism of the place, the spirits were most concentrated on the rooms of the sisters and novices who had occult family backgrounds or frequented occult practitioners (spiritists, faith healers, fortune-tellers, and sorcerers) when they were younger. Other areas of demonic concentration were the toilets, places where a lot of electronic gadgets were located, and some of the very old trees outside the formation house. A lot of spirits were discerned where the *padugo* ceremony took place.

During the exorcism, the exorcism team experienced the following: some of the lay members of the exorcism team experienced being pushed and punched when they were in the most infested areas; they also experienced suffocation and difficulty of breathing that prayers of deliverance had to be prayed over them. The retaliations then immediately stopped. Some of the lay members had sudden

intense headaches and stomach aches. One of the cars the team rode broke down for no apparent reason and the mechanic later was baffled regarding the breakdown. Some members of the exorcism team also had bad dreams the night before. This case was one of our earlier cases; today, after years of experience and formation, the team experiences only minor harassments during cases of infestation because they have learned how to protect themselves through proper spiritual preparations.

Additional assignments were given after the exorcism of the novitiate: group therapy to build up relationships in the community; counseling of those with traumatic (sexual and emotional abuse when they were younger) experiences; the novice who had an ancestral spirit (many family generations practiced witchcraft) was asked to go to an intergenerational liberation session.

The group (AMOE) returned after a few weeks to evaluate and interview each person for evaluation and feedback. Effects after the exorcism: some minor retaliations like itchiness two days after the exorcism but when the novices used the sacramentals like exorcised oil, the retaliations disappeared. The atmosphere became lighter and peaceful. For the first time, the community had a meeting without any conflict. There was less discord among the members and a stronger sense of unity in the community. The entire convent was liberated from all preternatural and demonic attacks and manifestations. There was stronger sense of the presence of the Lord. One of the sisters who had a lingering sickness was miraculously healed after the exorcism. All glory be to God!

Case No. 6 — Satanism and Witchcraft

According to the well-known exorcist, Msgr. Milivoj Bolobaniç, in his book, *An Exorcist Speaks: How to Recognize and Protect Oneself Against the Snares of the Evil One*, "There are those who abandon themselves to Satan, who then becomes their master. These people make a pact with Satan by willingly and completely surrendering to him. The pact is made up in a form of an imitation of the rite of baptism, which they sign with their own blood in the name of Satan. As a consequence, people fall under the complete and direct influence of Satan, their master. They perform black magic rituals in his name or become members of satanic sects which, sadly, are growing in number."[28] He describes the abominable rite called the 'black mass' where the "culmination of the "black mass" certainly occurs during 'communion' in which the stolen consecrated hosts are mixed with the blood of the sacrificed animal that the participants are to drink. This satanic act coincides with sexual orgies that are expected to procure magical strength. If a woman conceives a baby during such an intercourse, she is obligated to give birth in secrecy and sacrifice the child to Satan. The Satanists maintain that this type of sacrifice is the one that pleases Satan the most. So during these secretive séances, they offer animals, humans

and even children as altar sacrifices to appease the Evil One."[29]

Victim — a 27-year-old woman named Bessie

Bessie, was a 27-year-old woman from one of the provinces in the north. When she was still in elementary school, she was sexually abused by two of her cousins. Growing up, she was not emotionally close to any of her parents (they were absentee parents due to work and other worldly commitments) and when she related the abuse to them, her parents did not believe her. She has three siblings. Although she was intelligent, she was not appreciated within the family circle. She basically had an unhappy childhood. The family unit that should be a protection to a child growing up in the world was absent; we see here why one of the devil's most used strategies is to destroy the family.

Sadly, later in life, Bessie also experienced being continually raped by friends of the family. She, at that point, started to isolate herself and became withdrawn. She had a number of abortions during this time of sexual abuse. Her relationships began to rapidly deteriorate and she continually had fights with all those around her. Her only refuge was her *barkada*; they had become the center of her life. As she reached a more mature age, she finally ran away from home and became a working student. Her entire life was school, work, and party.

She was later discovered by a Satanic cult who knew about her past traumatic experiences. They knew how to lure her into their group through her many wounds in life. She eventually joined this cult in order to get revenge against those who had sexually abused her as well as to gain power that she could use to fulfill her ambitions and plans in life. To become a full-fledged member of the cult, she had to be initiated with satanic rituals. She was not alone; there were a few others who would join her in the initiation.

During the initiation which was almost two weeks in duration and which started on a Friday, she would go frequently into altered states of consciousness (hypnotic trance); it seems that a lot of hallucinogenic drugs were used to bring this about. During this time of the initiation, she would always feel tired, dizzy, and confused. She was also used frequently as a sexual object by the male members of the cult when she was in this trance state.

At one point in the initiation, all the recruits, who were wearing black robes complete with hoods, were required to share all the negative experiences in their lives; the more negative and painful, the better. The reason for this sharing was to bring about a hardening of each one's heart in order to block out permanently any positive emotions. They shared and intensified all the anger and hatred in their hearts and learned to relish in them. They were also taught to reject any form of love. They were, moreover, taught how to block out and cut off anything (feelings, experiences, etc.) and anyone (family, friends, etc.) that was good in their lives. In witchcraft and Satanism, hatred in the heart is especially needed

when casting diabolical curses and hexes as well as giving the devil a stronger power over the person.

The next step in the initiation process was the giving of occult (infested) objects and training each of the recruits on how to use them against those who have hurt them and anyone else they deemed as an enemy. These objects were therefore to be used in black magic. At one point in the initiation ritual, each of the recruits was forced to engage in cannibalism. (There is no need to go into details regarding this unimaginable aspect of the Satanic initiation process.)

Near the end of the initiation rites, all of the recruits were required to make a pact to Satan through a blood offering and each of them had to sign with their own blood a written pact with the devil. They then swore allegiance to the cult until death. They also swore that any children that they would bear would be offered to Satan. They furthermore swore to recruit new members regularly to the cult.

After the initiation ritual which was done in one of the highest mountains in the Ilocos region, Bessie started to see clearly the demons surrounding her and her companions. She not only saw them but could also hear their voices and was therefore able to communicate directly with them. During the next months, Bessie was taught higher levels of black magic: how to curse, make potions, how to conjure more spirits, how to do astral projection to harass her enemies, and how to attain certain preternatural powers over her body. The two cousins and the family friends who had molested her were cursed by her and they immediately ended up with severe terminal sicknesses. (These persons were not in the state of grace and had no spiritual life and relationship with God.)

There was a time in Bessie's life when she had to live in a boarding house in order to be closer to her work. This house was run by religious sisters. While living there, the sisters had a very hard time with her, for she was very unstable and combative and therefore always a cause of fights among the boarders. But the sisters did not want to give up on her by asking her to leave; they tried to help her as much as they could but to no avail. While Bessie was living in the boarding house, right before and during a full moon, the desire to harm others would become so strong. Another thing was that, when she would see human blood, she would experience a strong urge to drink it. In the boarding house, Bessie was also seen to possess certain incredible preternatural powers like she could climb any kind of tree easily (she would be seen as though she were floating up the tree) and could remain perched on even very small branches.

Now Bessie, while holding a normal job, continued to attend regularly Black Masses with her cult and sexual orgies were frequent during these occasions. The cult held these black masses at posh subdivisions in major cities, including Manila. They would hold their diabolical rituals near parish churches and religious convents in order to send curses and hexes to the residents. They especially "enjoyed" targeting contemplative convents by conjuring and sending the most powerful fallen angels there. In my experience, these curses are usually

death curses that cause sicknesses and infirmity as well as hexes that cause discord in the community, emotional mood swings of anger, sadness, depression, and fear, and finally sloth and dryness in one's spiritual life. These curses can also cause preternatural attacks like *bangungot* or what we may call night terrors and other more physical types of demonic oppression. The demons usually give more power to their followers who are able to cause the most damage to the Church, for instance, when a religious leaves his vocation due to the curses sent; however, if their followers fail, the demons usually inflict some form of painful punishment on them which is quite easy for the evil spirits to do since the Satanist is psychically and spiritually open and therefore vulnerable to them.

Catholics should therefore always be on guard and protected with the proper sacramentals; these weapons have always been used by the greatest saints of the Church. Some Catholics perceive the sacramentals as merely for show or for display, while others think of them as outmoded or old-fashioned; these are dangerous sentiments. Other targets of the followers of Satan are government officials and leaders of civil society in order to cause moral disorder, havoc, and breakdown in the social and moral order. Demons give clear instructions to their followers since, as was mentioned, their followers can see and hear them. In my experience as an exorcist, curses are also sent by Satanists and witches to persons whom they envy or are jealous of, as well as to children and babies, whom Satan hates especially. When I was studying exorcism in Rome, one of my professors mentioned that around 70% of their cases in Italy was due to curses sent to victims. Let us always remember to wear the armor of light!

Returning to Bessie, she was able to be continually in touch with the other members of the satanic cult, even though they were separated by distance, through telepathy. Then, later in life, Bessie met a serious accident which nearly cost her life. She was hospitalized and had a 50/50 chance of recovering. This incident opened her eyes to the truth about her situation. She started to fear for her immortal soul and dreaded the eternal consequences of her sinful life; because of this, she sought refuge in the Church. She first sought help from her parish priest. She was seeking desperately for a longer lease in life.

Of course, immediately, the evil spirits then started attacking and oppressing her in a very terrible manner. Whenever she tried to do any kind of good action, like praying and offering her suffering to make reparation for her past sins, her body would suffer tremendously with agonizing pains of unimaginable sorts. When she tried to break the pact that she made with the devil, she started to experience even more horrifying demonic assaults on her body; painful bruises and scratches appeared on her body (she would feel as though a very sharp razor was cutting her skin from the inside).

When the cult members found out psychically about her plan to leave the cult, she received threatening text messages from them. Although she had changed her number many times, the threatening messages continued. It is known that

members of a satanic cult will try to physically kill through curses and hexes any member who breaks his lifelong pact with the devil and the group. When the opportunity presents itself, they will even try to murder that member.

Aside from the above-mentioned attacks, Bessie constantly felt the spirits moving within her body like small snakes. She experienced severe demonic obsession; demonic voices were shouting and screaming in her head to commit suicide and that there was no hope for her. The demons also played easily with her emotions, making her fall into deep depression and then uncontrollable rage and then intense and irrational fears. Her imagination was also attacked ruthlessly; it was bombarded with all kinds of obscene, blasphemous, and demonic images. It was only the grace of God that prevented her from losing her mind. The main goal of the devil in these terror attacks is that if the victim does not return to him, he either loses his mind or commits suicide so that the conversion to God is not completed. [We have to remember that although Bessie was trying to return to God, her reason was one of fear of the devil and not of love for God (we also have to remember that the cult had taught her to harden her heart); if her life were not 50/50, she would still be deep in Satanism, causing graver and graver sins while continually harming those around her.]

The parish priest prayed deliverance prayers over her which only temporarily alleviated her intense sufferings and he instructed her to use the sacramentals. Holy water irritated her skin and she could not wear the scapular and rosary. If she tried to enter any church, she trembled, convulsed, and ended up doing sacrilegious actions like undressing in front of the altar.

She was asked to attend an intergenerational healing seminar with a certain Catholic charismatic community. She woke up at 3:00 a.m. the night before the seminar with the spirits warning her that they would retaliate and hurt her if she attends the session. In the ministry, we would not have prioritized an intergenerational healing seminar since the demons have attached to her primarily through her consecrating herself to them.

The next day, she had a difficult time participating in the intergenerational healing sessions which were supposed to last a few days; she felt very tired, weak, and drained; her mind was confused during the talks; extreme depression and isolation were felt by her and a deep darkness enshrouded her entire being. On the third day of the seminar, her demonic possession started; she became violent and abusive as evil spirits took full control of her body. She ended up not receiving any major benefit from the seminar.

After the seminar, Bessie went into an almost continual state of possession. She was possessed by legions of demons whose number had built up through her long years of conjuring and making deals with them for her personal selfish benefits. The parish priest then sought help from our office (AMOE).

During the first interview with AMOE, the unclean spirits manifested themselves and became verbally abusive, so the interview had to be stopped. When AMOE entered into the picture, we noticed that liberation was difficult

due to a disposition in the victim that had to be addressed first; she lacked the sincerity in developing her relationship with God; she sought God because of fear of the afterlife and the just judgment of God. Also, she sought God in order that her life be prolonged. There was no real desire for a relationship of love with the Lord. She therefore followed only in a legalistic and magical manner the spiritual assignments that were given to her. She had to undergo a process of proper evangelization and spiritual counseling to correct the above tendencies and to bring her to a real love relationship with God. When she was more prepared, additional assignments were given such as renouncement of the pacts with Satan and the cult, including all their activities that she participated in. These assignments also included Confession, renewal of baptismal vows and consecration to Jesus and Mama Mary, forgiveness for those who hurt her, use of the sacramentals like holy water, exorcised salt, exorcised oil, the St. Benedict's medal as well as the scapular, a real devotion to Mama Mary and the Rosary, and frequent participation at Mass. Of course, she had to get rid of all her demonic paraphernalia, like her book of curses and spells (Grimoire) and the like. She did all these as best as she could while undergoing constant harassments from the devil. Her physical condition had improved at this point, hence she was given these assignments and she was able to fulfill them.

When we noticed that she was this time prepared physically and had a minimum disposition spiritually, an exorcism was scheduled. Consent from her doctors was obtained and we also had our own volunteer doctor present. During the first exorcism the following occurred: extreme violence, screaming, crying and moaning, vomiting, bruises appearing suddenly on her body, intense stomach pains and headaches, strong violent reactions against prayers prayed in Latin, aversive reactions when relics or a crucifix (without her seeing the sacred objects) were placed near the back of her head, extraordinary strength, burning sensations when exorcised oil was placed on her, and insects coming out of her head.

During the session, when the evil spirits had been weakened and lessened, she was asked to pray with sincerity the consecration to Mama Mary by St. Louis de Montfort. After the consecration prayer, she felt a lot better with no longer negative reactions to the praying of the Roman Ritual of Exorcism. Many spirits had left after the first session but not all; but they were not anymore strong enough to retaliate and hurt her as seriously as before.

With the succeeding exorcisms (with lesser and lesser demonic manifestations) and with a slowly developing relationship with God (although she had not yet been totally liberated), she had reached a point wherein she was able to live a normal life. AMOE was not able to continually journey with this case because of certain reasons, although other priests took over the case.

This case which occurred some years back took a long time to liberate; this was so, since the demonic bondages and emotional traumas were quite deep. She also had a lot to expiate for since she had harmed many people through her

curses and hexes. But most important to note was that when she sought help from the Church, she had no positive relationship with God whatsoever and had difficulty beginning one. She had been conditioned well by the cult to have only one emotion and that was hate.

Looking back now after many years of experience and after handling more similar cases, what would I have done differently? First, I would have included counseling and inner (emotional) healing sessions. Secondly, as soon as she was able to fully participate in the session without going into a possessed state, I would have used the prayers of liberation against the spirit of divination that powers the occult third eye (the prayer needs the active participation of the victim). It should be remembered that she became psychic during the satanic initiation.

"Satanism," according to Fr. Jesús Ma. Merino Antolinez, OP in his pamphlet entitled *The World Religions and Satanism*, "is the perversion of the reverence and solemn profession of submission due to God misdirecting them towards the rotten spirit who is Satan." The author adds, "St. Thomas quotes and agrees with St. Augustine in remarking that the devils, Satan above all, delight in the divine honors of the sacrificial performance."

To conclude this chapter, I would like to delve into St. Thomas Aquinas' demonology. Fr. Antolinez, OP points out certain important characteristics of the devil from the treatises of St. Thomas which can aid us in spiritual warfare. First, "The devils in their dealings with men tell the truth, but to avail themselves of credentials and means of cheating and wronging them." Here we see the deceptive nature of the devil trying to appear as an angel of light to gain our confidence before stabbing us in the back. Discernment is the weapon that must be used here. Second, "They love to disguise their own identity under the appearances of departed men, especially of those beloved or hated." Here we see how the devil can enter the life of a person through his dealings with the preternatural world of spiritism. Keeping away from anything that has to do with the occult, whether beings from the preternatural world or powers found there, is the strategy here. Third, "They are fond of handling lust and of inducing men into sins of the flesh, because the dirt is sticky and to come out of it more difficult." Our Lady of Fatima told the children that most souls fall into hell because of sins of the flesh. St. Thomas points out a very effective weapon that demons use to bring us into their kingdom: lust. Let us therefore daily mortify the concupiscence within us (that wars against the spirit) and place it under the control of our reason illumined by faith. Focusing on developing a virtuous life is the weapon against the flesh. Fourth, "A queer perversion of the demons is the preference they exhibit for visualizing themselves in the form of animals capable of mythologizing their peculiar oddities." Elementals, nature spirits, and fairies (they are either purely animal in appearance or have a combination of human and animal features) are the fallen angels. Expulsion is the only response to their presence, not mutual coexistence (which pagans and New Agers

recommend). This has always been the teaching of the Church since her beginnings; let us not be fooled.

The Moral Dimension: The Pagan Disposition

"For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather of power and of love and self-contorl."

—2 Timothy 1:7

As a Catholic nation, why are we not becoming holy and why is there misery around us? Yes, the cross will always be a part of the follower of the Lord. But why does it seem that the sufferings we are experiencing do not bring us the peace and joy which the cross always brings? Why are we becoming miserable? And why are the crosses not bringing us closer to the Lord and making us a more virtuous nation?

The answer again is found in syncretism. As the previous chapters focused on the spiritual effects of syncretism, this chapter will expound on its effects on the moral life of a normal Filipino Catholic.

Before the coming of the Spaniards, we were a country with a belief system called animism or paganism. It has to be noted that all religions that have no foundation in Judaism or Christianity are animistic or pagan. We see this in all the religions that surrounded Israel in the Old Testament. In the New Testament world, this was also the perspective of the apostles, evangelists, and Church Fathers with regard to all the lands within and outside the Greco-Roman empire. How did this situation of paganism/animism encompassing almost the entire globe come about?

I expound on this reality through the lens of angelology. In the book, *The Angels and Their Mission*, Cardinal Jean Daniélou, an expert in Patristics and adviser (*peritus*) to the Second Vatican Council, speaks about how paganism/animism arose. The discussion that follows below come mostly from his chapter entitled "The Angels and World Religion."

The Angels and Paganism according to the Church Fathers[30]

The author makes certain important points:

- *The whole economy of the Old Testament was communicated to the Jews through the medium of the angels.*
- *The role of the angels in the Old Testament is bound up with the Old Testament's preparatory mission, and it ceases with the coming of Christ, who takes the history of salvation directly into his own hands.*

Before the coming of Jesus, each of the nations had an angel to watch over the people.

- *God has entrusted the nations to his angels.*
- *Deuteronomy 32:8: "When the Most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he appointed the bounds of people according to the number of the angels of God."*
- *Clement of Alexandria writes, "The presiding powers of the angels have been distributed according to the nations and the cities."*
- *It is their mission to lead the pagan peoples to God.*
- *No matter how perverted they are, they retain some vestige of the natural revelation, and that vestige is due to the angels who have passed it on to them and who strive to keep it alive among them.*

This is what makes inculturation possible.

- *Whatever part of truth was known to the pagan peoples and was later to be recognized and taken up by Christianity; the wisdom of Roman law, the philosophical truths arrived at by Plato and Aristotle—all this came to them from the providence of the one God acting through the ministry of the angels.*

The Church Fathers speak of an almost total failure in the mission of the angels (with the exception of Israel) with regard to the nations because all end up in idolatry (polytheism); their original monotheistic belief that there was only one God was destroyed.

- *The traces of truth were everywhere profoundly corrupted by idolatry.*

There are very few exceptions.

- *There is one outstanding example of these exceptions: Melchizedek, the King of Salem in the time of Abraham who was a priest most pleasing to God; he was a priest of the one true God, to indicate to all that his role was not only to be personally converted to God, but also to lead others along the way of spiritual ascent.*

Why did the angels of the nations fail with their mission to keep the nations (not including Israel whose guardian was St. Michael) monotheistic?

- *For Pseudo-Dionysius, the greatest obstacle to the activity of the angels was the evil will of men. But a second must be added to it: the activity of the demons.*
- *If the nations have their good angels sent by God to assist and guide them, they are also the prey of demons who try to turn them away from the true God.*
- *The favorite method employed is to enmesh them in idolatry. This idolatry, in which St. Paul saw the corruption of the religion handed down to the nations by God, is essentially the work of the Devil.*
- *Thus the demons take the place of the angels in the government and direction of nations.*
- *This origin of idolatry is described by all the Fathers.*
- *Eusebius cites Romans 1:21-23 in this regard, where the corruption of natural religion into idolatry is marked out.*
- *Among the non-biblical religions, first a cosmic revelation, which is that of the true God; and then idolatry, which is the perversion of it.*
- *The Fathers of the Church present the ages that preceded Christ as marking an increase in the power of the demons. The vestiges of a monotheistic revelation, communicated to all men through the ministry of the angels, grow faint with the flourishing of idolatry and devil worship.*
- *For Eusebius, the angels, discouraged at their lack of success among the pagan peoples, have to be satisfied with the administration of the visible world.*

But all is not lost because God in the Person of Jesus enters into the scene to aid the angels in their mission to bring back the pagans to the worship of the one true God and, even more, to invite them to become his children.

- *But in the midst of this desperate situation, the Word of God becomes incarnate, in order to come to the aid of his angels.*
- *Now, since such great evils had fallen upon the whole of the inhabited earth through the wicked spirits and their leader, since none of the angels were able to prevent these evils, the Word of God, the Savior of all, came to men as their Physician and helped his angels in their work for the salvation of men.*

The angels in charge of the nations were the angels who welcomed the birth of our Lord with such rejoicing and happiness since this time they had a fighting chance to bring back the nations to God.

- *The angels in charge of the nations welcomed the coming of the savior with great happiness.*
- *The mystery of the Christmas angels is primarily that of the angels of the nations surrounding the Infant God who has come to the aid of the pagan peoples entrusted to them, for whom they put forth all their labor in vain.*

- *The angels, charged with the care of things on earth and powerless to lead them to good, were waiting for a divine intervention to come to their assistance.*
- *The Savior places under his powerful protection no longer only Israel but all the nations of earth who were first apportioned to the many angels and became involved in all manner of ungodliness.*

We see therefore in the near future, the entire Greco-Roman world become Christian and worship the One True God.

- *Man now has, in Christ, immediate access to the Father without passing through the intermediary of the angels.*

The mediation of the angels over all the nations is taken over by Jesus. Jesus takes direct control of the history of salvation. The new mission of the angels is now to serve Jesus, the new Mediator. Jesus now forms the Church to bring not only the chosen people of Israel but all the nations to the worship of the One True God. And as the Church is the Body of Christ, the angels accompany us in this work of evangelization.

- *Just as the Apostles were sent visibly to the pagan nations, the angels are sent invisibly to draw them to the Church.*
- *Here we find once again the angels of the nations and their missionary role. Now that Christ is here, they try to lead to him the souls entrusted to them. The angels of the nations become the angels of the Church and we see this fact in that angels are placed at the head of churches to establish and govern them.*

Some important points to consider:

1. The angels have an integral role to play in evangelization. In any evangelization program, the role of the angels must always be taken into account.

2. Interreligious dialogue is important; but what is of utmost importance is to continue the missionary work entrusted to us by Christ which is to bring all nations to the worship of the One True God. There are still many pagan polytheistic nations out there with their angels waiting for evangelizers.

Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit” (Mt 28:18-19).

Characteristics of Animism

"You will see how the demons, whom you (pagans) set up in high places and honor as lords, are bound by our hands and tremble under our power."

—St. Cyprian

Returning now to the nature of paganism/animism found in non-biblical religions, some characteristics of animism[31] are the following:

1. Animism, which comes from the Latin word *anima* or breath, is extensive and persistent around the world as the basic underpinning of all non-biblical religions. This was the belief system found in all the nations surrounding Israel in the Old Testament and which Yahweh was very strict about. Contamination with this belief system was idolatrous and had grave consequences for the Israelites. This sin of idolatry was the principal cause why Israel fell into misery and subjugation to her enemies and why Israel was seen as an unfaithful spouse. Yahweh again and again, as a faithful spouse, continued to woo her back. Animistic practices range from the use of enchantments, dealings with pagan gods, wizardry, mediumship, witchcraft, soothsaying, divination, fortune-telling, necromancy, fertility rites, and the like.

2. Animism believes that all things in the universe, whether material or spiritual, share essentially in the same nature; the entire universe is therefore alive and pulsating with life. This cosmic life force is divine in nature. Therefore for the animist, the universe is God and God is the universe. This is what we call pantheism which has been condemned by the Church since it contradicts a transcendent personal and loving God. The cosmic life force or universal energy is a power that, for the animist, can be used for good or evil purposes. In the New Age Movement, one is taught how to attract it. A pagan's main goal in life is to control and manipulate these powers found in the universe. One can clearly perceive the impersonal nature of animism wherein the divine is not seen as a person whom one can form a relationship with but an impersonal energy which man can use in order to get what he desires and craves for; all that is needed is finding the right ritual or means. Here we begin to see the legalistic nature of animism.

3. The hunger for power and control in one's life is the foundation of animism. In its essence and practices, man determines his own destiny; for an individual animist, he becomes the center of the universe and not the divine around him. Animism is therefore totally anthropocentric or man-centered. Everything that is done is for self-advantage: to receive something in return. Man's will is supreme in all things. When an animist, for example, offers

sacrifices to the spirits, he does so not for their sakes, but for his own. A pagan disposition is therefore a self-serving one and not a transcendent one; hence it is utilitarian in essence.

4. Animism is a search for and discovery of power sources by which an animist may manipulate the powers in the universe to execute his will. Animism is therefore most attractive to man's concupiscence or the "old man" in us and frequently seems to triumph in gaining man's allegiance. Power sources can either come from nature or the many spirit beings (who are, of course, more highly evolved) or deities found in the universe. Animism is therefore power focused that tries to change what is outside of man and does not in any way bring about transformation of what is within. Interior conversion is therefore foreign to an animist.

5. The power found in paganism is called by many names such as life force, force vital, life essence, cosmic energy, spirit, mana, prana, and dynamism. Now, power is needed to make rain, give good crops, heal diseases, guarantee fertility, etc. It is also needed for protection against disease, evil spells, catastrophes, and material failure. Some ways to secure power include contacting occult specialists, performing rituals, communicating with spirit beings or ancestors, as well as using amulets and talismans.

6. As was stated, animists believe in spirit beings or gods that can interact with man. This makes animism polytheistic which is the belief in many gods. Animists believe that some of these spirit beings inhabit rocks, trees, mountains, springs, groves, and other geographical areas, idols, shrines, and even persons (mediums). They may be manipulated to serve man. Mountains are also known to be the traditional abode of more superior spirits. In our country, a generic term used for these beings is elemental spirits; abroad, the term fairy is fairly used. An example in our country of a mountain known to be the special abode of nature spirits and where occult power is very much present is Mt. Banahaw. A person who is psychic is able to interact and communicate with these spirits and many become occult specialists. The Church has always maintained from the Old Testament to the Fathers and Doctors of the Church that these so-called elementals, who were later seen and treated as gods and deities in early Church history, were no other than the fallen angels. This is a truth many Filipino Catholics do not realize, hence the very real danger of deception and contamination.

7. Occult specialists are people thought to be more powerful than others because of their success in making contact with power sources such as the deities and ancestors, as well as having magical paraphernalia for good luck and protection. They have knowledge of rituals to obtain and manipulate power. Here in our country, we still see the existence of these occult specialists in the

hundreds of thousands of faith healers, spiritists, witches, wizards, shamans, witch doctors, magicians, fortune-tellers, and sorcerers. When a pagan experiences some form of misfortune in life, he would go to these specialists to find out how to restore harmony with the spirit world whom he has, whether intentionally or not, offended and angered. It must be remembered that the animist believes that his world and all that happens in it is controlled by spirits, hence if every physical event has a spiritual coordinate, it is only logical for him to seek to manipulate the spiritual powers responsible.

8. The rituals of sacrifice and offering (idolatry) found in paganism are practiced to establish and maintain communication with the spirit world, appease it, seek its help in time of need, or even blind it to some taboo infraction. When an animist believes that he has done something wrong towards the spirit world, appeasement rites are done. They are made not out of repentance but out of fear lest misfortune like an illness strike the animist. We see here the lack of any interior conversion since the focus is merely on placating the angered deity through bribes. So in this belief system, sacrifices and offerings are not made to expiate any kind of sin but to maintain filial relations with the spirit world.

9. Animism is very legalistic since finding and using the correct formula are indispensable in securing a desired objective. This is called a magical mentality wherein the rites and rituals done are not in any way connected with one's life or interior disposition. The efficacy of the ritual has nothing to do with the moral integrity of the animist; what is only important is the meticulous performance of the rite or ritual. Therefore, an evil person can perform the ritual and still obtain a result. We will later see this continuing pagan disposition with regards to our Catholic faith.

10. Animism is a system that is also based on fear, hence it is an enslaving system. Fear of the spirits, fear of others with more power, and fear of the universe that must be controlled enslave the animist to continually search and maintain various rituals and rites for every occasion and circumstance of life. This is a natural consequence when there is no belief in a loving personal God maintaining the entire universe through his divine providence, a God that is concerned with all dimensions of our life, from the ultimate questions to the most intimate and ordinary. Remember that pagan gods have an overwhelming insatiability to be adored, hence fear and submission will be the consequence of anyone who falls under their sway.

11. Animism or paganism is a way of exploitation whereby the spirit beings or deities bribe man and man in turn bribes them. These deities or gods (the fallen angels) desire man to submit himself by offerings and placations in exchange for some form of material benefit. Man is the initiator when he

desires something from the spirit world and must perform the required ritual to awaken the spirits. He must entice the spirit into action through an appropriate ritual, and even then he cannot be sure that the deity will respond favorably. The relationship between man and the spirit is at best quid pro quo. So divinities enter into man's affairs according to their use for his end. Man therefore implores and sacrifices not out of devotion but to manipulate the spirit world.

12. Animism also believes that the deceased become deities after passing from this life. They are accessible to the living and vice versa. This, of course, easily leads to spiritism. The deceased or ancestors are therefore worshipped, they are intermediaries, securing the blessings of the spirit world; of course, we mean here only material blessings. If the proper rites are not done, the ancestors will pour forth their wrath through some form of bad luck. Hence a pagan is in a sense coerced to continually perform rites and offer sacrifices like food to the deceased to continue to receive good luck and avert bad luck.

13. Animism is a practical and utilitarian system; what religion can do for me and how it can provide for my wants. There is no gift of oneself in a relationship but merely using one's religion for one's own ends.

Looking now at the morality in the Philippines, it can be clearly seen that aside from our Catholic faith, another belief system is operating. Our old pre-Spanish animistic religion is still very much alive in our modern day-to-day living. This we clearly see in the many superstitious beliefs and practices still existing in our country as well as the existence of so many occult practitioners and occult paraphernalia. The contamination of our faith has not only affected the spiritual atmosphere in our country as we have seen in the previous chapters but has caused a very negative moral effect as well. We are therefore not able to respond fully to the call of our loving God to the depths of intimacy and union that he so desires to have with us.

Fr. Vitaliano R. Gorospe, SJ, in his article "Christian Renewal of Filipino Values," states that even today, we find merely the external trappings of Catholic belief superimposed on the original pattern of pre-Christian animism. This means that there is a pagan disposition existing within the Filipino psyche that still has to be purified. The different characteristics of animism which we have discussed in the beginning of this chapter are still very much alive. Fr. Jaime Bulatao, SJ speaks therefore of the Filipino as having these two inconsistent religious systems when he speaks of the "Split-level Christianity" in Philippine religiosity. Because animism is an amoral, self-seeking, and magical belief system, we Filipinos can be centered merely on the external performance of the rites and rituals, without the need for any proper interior dispositions like conversion of heart and real repentance nor do anyone of us become concerned about the will of God for one's life as much as one's will must be that which

God has to follow and fulfill. We, our plans and ambitions as well as our wants and desires, become the center in our spiritual life and not God, and it is sad that when things go wrong in our decisions, we can end up blaming God. Another important point is that in the pagan disposition, the power is in the words found in the rites and rituals themselves, and for as long as one has said and performed them exactly, one has already done one's duty; when this is seen with regard to our faith, the relational dimension with God is totally destroyed as well as the effect it should have in our daily life. Transformation of the interior becomes impossible in this type of spiritual mindset.

I would like to give some examples to make evident the above dynamics. A Catholic with a pagan inner disposition attends Sunday Mass, but then will expect that God now owes him something in return and that he has already fulfilled his religious duty for the week in order to be saved; he now returns to his work and family and forgets about religion until next Sunday's Mass. The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist therefore has no real effect in this person's daily life; there is no connection. The relational aspect (with God) is also lacking as well as the struggle to grow towards holiness of life. That is why we know of people who attend Mass regularly and even pray the Rosary regularly yet live immoral lives; and what is most shocking is that they do not even show any signs of guilt. And when the cross comes into the life of this type of person, even though he has heard of the centrality of the cross in the life of Christ and his followers thousands of times, he sees it as a curse and gets angry at God since he is a "good Catholic" who continually does his duty (Sunday Mass) and therefore does not deserve to suffer or be tried.

Another example would be the sacramental for the blessing of vehicles. It can sometimes be seen as a mere magical incantation for protection from danger without any link to one's relationship with God. The blessing asks that Jesus become the Companion of those who would be riding in the car. We can now ask ourselves, "How do we drive after having our cars blessed?," "Are we really aware of this presence of Jesus so that when we are driving, we try to be pleasing in his sight by driving with more patience, humility, and peace?" It is important to remind ourselves that the graces and blessings that ensue from the sacraments, the sacramentals, and our other Catholic practices are given precisely as a support on our journey towards holiness: to deepen our love relationship with God. "Does my life conform to the blessings that I ask for?"

Being a Catholic and maintaining a pagan disposition in our interior life is a real danger for us that we must continually examine ourselves. If we are not careful, we may end up with novenas not being prayed but said as *orasyons* or magical incantations; we may wear the scapular but use it like a talisman or amulet *(anting-anting*) or we may run a business with the image of the Sto. Niño revered like an *anito*; an object that merely brings good luck. Just seeing the graft and corruption so prevalent in a Catholic country which does not seem to bother those involved proves that a pagan disposition is still very much alive.

Inculturation is important in evangelization but the challenge here is that we must be very careful in order that we do not inculturate elements and dispositions within the Philippine culture which have nothing to do with our traditional values but are actually elements of our former form of worship to the many animist gods and goddesses of our ancestors. This would make our faith idolatrous and almost morally useless in our daily lives. An important point to remember is that unless we purify our faith of pagan or animist contamination, we will continue to treat our loving and generous God as the pagans treated the elemental spirits of the world: in some form of impersonal barter system. The New Evangelization is not anymore converting pagans to Christianity but purifying the pagan dispositions found in our faith. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines speaks very clearly of this challenge by stating that we are a people sacramentalized but not evangelized. Our faith is not connected with life. The challenge of our Catholic faith then is not only to be able to bring out the best in our Filipino culture, particularly our inherent religiosity as a people, and redirect them to the truly good and true but that those elements which are contrary to the Gospel may be seen in its proper light and purged; then and only then can our faith truly transform our society by producing holy Christians and placing all things under the dominion and lordship of Christ.

Purifying Our Catholic Faith of Paganism

Let us examine ourselves whether what is motivating and guiding us in life is a Catholic disposition or a pagan one.

In our worship and thanksgiving

Pagan Disposition
Fulfilling all external rituals and rites is what is most important.
Catholic Disposition
The greatest glory to God is holiness of life and is the essence of any sacrifice and thanksgiving.
Pagan Disposition
I worship and adore God that I may continue to receive his blessings and be on his good graces.
Catholic Disposition
I worship God because he deserves it and even if there is nothing that I would receive in return, I will continue to adore him.

Pagan Disposition
The important thing is to do many things for God.
Catholic Disposition

The more important thing is to make sure that my intentions are pure (for God alone; he must increase and I must decrease).

It is important that I have a correct image of who God is because my entire relationship with him depends on it. For example, a person who cannot believe that God would forgive his sins is a person who has a wrong image of God. Or it may be that I tend to see God solely with a certain attribute of his while discounting his other attributes; for example, I see God only as being merciful and forget that he is also just which then leads me to presumption and a life of lukewarmness or, as was mentioned, I see only God's justice and end up in despair. Is my image of God that of Jesus' image of the Father, or is my image based on what I am feeling at the moment, what I desire him to be based on my concupiscence or the perceptions gained through a life of compromise with the world? "Is the image of God that I have that of a loving Father (Catholic) or as an avenging god awaiting my sacrifices and offerings (pagan)?" It is therefore important to continue to pray and meditate using the Scriptures and writings of the saints so that we would continually have a correct image of God. Honestly speaking, I can say that our culture is not anymore Christian, therefore we must check our image of God since it may already have been distorted.

It is important to remember that our intentions and motivations are of utmost importance when we pray and worship God. Purity of intention should always be checked and, if needed, purified. "When I pray and offer something to the Lord, is my intention based on love of God or is it based on love of self?" The Lord does not desire empty external offerings like those from the hypocrites in the Gospel. The Lord first and foremost looks at the heart just as we read in the Old Testament story of Cain and Abel; he looks at the heart because what he desires from us is a love relationship. God is in love with us!

So let us ask ourselves, "Do I worship God first and foremost with my heart so that whatever I do for God and say to him are merely manifestations and outpourings of what is in my heart?" And a final question to check ourselves: "When I am doing something for God, do I focus more on the virtues (Catholic) that motivate my actions or the actions (pagan) themselves?"

In our prayers of petition and supplication

Pagan Disposition
When I ask God for something, I feel like I must make God hear me through finding the right prayers, novenas, sacrifices, etc.
Catholic Disposition
When I ask God for something, I focus primarily on having the proper attitudes like that of a child (trust, confidence, love, sincerity, and humility).

Pagan Disposition

When I petition God for something, I focus more on trying to make a bargain with God.
Catholic Disposition
When I petition God for something, I focus more on his will as having the final say and whatever he gives as what is best for me.

Pagan Disposition
I deserve what God gives me because I am a good Catholic; I go to Mass, confession, etc.
Catholic Disposition
All that God gives me is pure gift and I can never deserve them with all that I may do.

Pagan Disposition
When I ask God for something, my value system or standard for what I ask for is what I believe I need and want.
Catholic Disposition
When I ask God for something, my value system or standard is that of Jesus.

What I ask from God is what would matter the most to Jesus.

Pagan Disposition
What I ask from God are mostly material and temporal goods.
Catholic Disposition
What I ask from God are mostly spiritual goods and if there are any temporal goods, only those that would assist me in becoming a saint.

Pagan Disposition
When I am suffering, I focus more on asking God to remove the cause of my suffering.
Catholic Disposition
When I am suffering, I focus more on asking God for the graces to bear my sufferings, to carry my crosses well.

When we pray to God to provide for our daily needs, the inner disposition is primary. This disposition is that of a child on the lap of his father. What are the dispositions that a child has that make a father listen to him? Do we have the same dispositions when we pray to our heavenly Father? We have to always be aware of our hearts. We attract God more from what is in our hearts than what we do or what we say.

I remember in my own life in the ministry of exorcism how weak and useless prayers were, whether commanding unclean spirits or seeking the aid of God, when the proper disposition was not present in my heart. This taught me firsthand that we may be merely mouthing prayers, not praying them. We must

therefore always be alert that our prayers, since we pray them again and again, do not become merely lip service and that the heart becomes more and more distant and stale. God is truly pleased when we pray knowing and focused on whom we are speaking to, knowing and meaning what we are saying, and always cognizant of who we are who are praying. A question to reflect on is: "Do I have the same vision that Jesus had of his Father and therefore could receive all he asked or do I have another vision?"

Let us remember that a truly Catholic disposition is desiring the person of Jesus more than what he can give us; we must be careful that we do not end up seeking merely the consolations of God and not the God of consolations. In my experience in the ministry, some who come to us seek only healing and liberation but not a relationship with the Lord. This is the magical pagan disposition clearly at work; they do not desire to change their sinful ways and respond to the invitation of the Lord for a love relationship; they simply desire that he liberate them. There are a few cases that when we try to evangelize them regarding the need for a change of heart, they leave and therefore we have to terminate the case. Very sad. Imagine how hurt a human father would be if he had a son or daughter with this attitude; how would a parent react if a son only validated the existence of his father whenever he needed his allowance and did not care about having any form of relationship with him as long as he gets his money? This attitude of a child is humanly unthinkable and yet with regard to our heavenly, loving Father, some of his children have this attitude.

In our prayers of contrition

Pagan Disposition
My vision of Jesus is that Jesus came to judge me.
Catholic Disposition
My vision of Jesus is that Jesus came to save me.

Pagan Disposition
I am more afraid of suffering than sin.
Catholic Disposition
I am more afraid of sin than suffering.

Pagan Disposition
I detest sin first and foremost because of how it would affect me; I fear especially the penalty of sin (servile fear).
Catholic Disposition
I detest sin first and foremost because of how it affects God; I fear hurting the Father who loves me and cares for me (filial fear).

Pagan Disposition

I experience God's commandments as mere obligations that I need to fulfill to enter heaven.
Catholic Disposition
I experience God's commandments as a gift that will securely guide me to the fullness of a love relationship with him.

Pagan Disposition
The commandments are burdensome; I must submit to them or else suffer the consequences.
Catholic Disposition
The commandments make me feel that I am a friend of God; they allow me to share in his life, love, and power; they are signs of my union with God.

Pagan Disposition
When I sin, I regret sinning (me-centered).
Catholic Disposition
When I sin, I repent that I have sinned (God/love-centered).

Pagan Disposition
When I leave the confessional, I live my life as before.
Catholic Disposition
When I leave the confessional, I make changes in my life.

Pagan Disposition
I can take it easy with my weaknesses because I can always and easily go to Confession.
Catholic Disposition
Each Confession should be an ever-growing, always unique encounter with God's mercy that makes me more and more Christlike.

A Catholic sees sin as the greatest of all evils, not suffering nor even death since Jesus himself suffered and died. It is only sin that can separate us from our loving God. It is only sad that when a person dies, the usual question that is asked is not anymore, "Was he spiritually prepared?" but "Did he suffer?" No wonder, some countries do not anymore see anything wrong with euthanasia. A person who is dying in suffering is actually given a privilege that we usually see in the lives of many of the saints: the opportunity to expiate here and not in purgatory our remaining attachments to sin and the temporal punishment that is due to previous sins that still have to be expiated so that when one dies, one may immediately enter heaven or if he has to still pass purgatory, it would have been greatly diminished in length and intensity.

Now, a Catholic detests sin so much because he knows what it cost God, what it did to Jesus, and how God is personally hurt when a child of his is in sin. If God loves us infinitely and in the most personal manner, then sin is very

personal to him and hurts him also infinitely. So a truly Catholic disposition hates sin first and foremost because it is a relational evil and not merely because it is a cause for future punishment. A Catholic sees the effects of sin clearly in its spiritual repercussions with regard his soul (which God infinitely loves), his relationship with God (which is broken or at least weakened) as well as the effect on the extrinsic (not intrinsic) glory of God (which he will see clearly when he enters heaven). A Catholic disposition sees very clearly that the commandments of God are not arbitrary rules like those found in animism but values that make us more and more like Jesus and they are therefore the essence of our union with God in heaven.

A pagan disposition is believing that knowing less the moral statutes and commandments of God, the better; he mistakenly believes that ignorance is bliss and that it will lessen his guilt if he does not follow them since he does not know them. This attitude manifests that of a servant who in the Gospel does not know the whys of God's laws and he is not a friend who sees the intrinsic transformative value of them (they make us more like Jesus). Additionally, just as in a human loving relationship, if we really loved someone, we would try to discover what pleases the person and then do it, as well as try to discover what displeases the person and avoid it; this desire to know what pleases and displeases the one we love would never be felt as some form of burden. So if a person truly loves God, he would have this desire to find out what gives him glory and what does not so that he may better make God happy.

The correct image of who Jesus is and why he has come is important since if a person believes that Jesus came to judge him, the relationship with God would deteriorate to the pagan disposition of an impersonal offering to placate an angered deity which brings a life of fear, anxiety, burden, and growing distance; but if one believes that Jesus has come to save him, he would not be afraid to be totally open and honest with himself and with Jesus which would develop the virtues of gratitude, confidence, humility, and love.

A Catholic disposition with regard to seeking forgiveness from God is always motivated by love; it is focused more on what is in the heart than the external actions required; it knows that it can never earn God's forgiveness but only humbly seek God's mercy which is a pure gift given out of love; it does penance not to placate God but to restore order to the disorder and to manifest its gratefulness and sincerity. And its repentance is not a one-time impersonal act of atonement which is found in animism but a conversion that influences its future behavior so that its life becomes more and more Christlike.

Discernment of Mystical Phenomena Part I

"We belong to God, and anyone who knows God listens to us, while anyone who does not belong to God refuses to hear us. This is how we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit."

—1 John 4:6

Discerning Private Revelations

The study of discerning mystical phenomena whether they be of divine, demonic, or human origin is especially relevant today since Scriptures itself warns us that in the latter days, the devil will deceive the world and even the elect through "signs and wonders." Today, we see this reality all around us; there are so many seemingly mystical phenomena that without some principles to guide us, we may easily be misled by the evil one. In our country, discernment is especially important, because we as a people have a tendency to be easily enamored by seemingly supernatural manifestations that occur in and outside our country. Added to this is the influx of the New Age Movement plus the growing search for answers and relief in paganism/animism to the many present and growing difficulties in the life of an ordinary Filipino Catholic. The Lord's love for us has not left us blind; he has left us the Church which the Holy Spirit will always keep in the truth to make sure that we would, if we are humble and obedient, not be led astray by the evil one. It is crucial therefore to learn to listen to the Church in order that we may always remain in the truth and reach the shores of Paradise unscathed.

There are so many so-called mystics out there in and out of the Church who claim that they have direct communication with God and many fall into right away believing in what they say and teach because many of them have some form of mystical or magical power. It is of utmost importance for a Catholic to discern these persons who claim to be mystics and visionaries since many

Filipino Catholics have already ended outside the Church (cults, sects, and false religions) or, if still within the Church, live a contaminated, disordered, and heretical form of Catholicism.

Some guidelines about supposed mystics/visionaries are therefore in order which will be expounded on in the succeeding chapters.

The aim of these guidelines is to assist the legitimate superior and authority (diocesan bishop/religious superior/priest spiritual director) in discerning the authenticity of a supposed mystic or visionary. The second goal is to make the lay faithful more discerning with regards those who claim they have direct access to God in order that they may not be led astray. A final aim is for those experiencing certain mystical phenomena to have some form of guidance so that they may better discern what is going on; but I would recommended to these persons the guidance of a priest spiritual director because one cannot direct oneself, especially when it comes to mystical phenomena.

In this volume, I would define a visionary or a mystic as someone whom God communicates with in an extraordinary manner. These persons therefore receive revelations from God through visions and locutions and when these revelations are supposed to be of a public nature, they are supported and validated by miraculous signs. Examples would be the saints to whom Mama Mary communicated with in her many approved apparitions. A more recent saint would be the well-known saint, Padre Pio. These guidelines should be used in conjunction with humble prayer to the Holy Spirit and Mama Mary because the devil, the master deceiver, can even give false signs which are difficult to discern properly since he knows much better than the best theologian in the world the criteria of the Church in discerning mystical phenomena. Intellect alone without grace will always be deceived. I myself with all my background in mystical theology was deceived by a false visionary once and I only saw the deception when I made a humble prayer to Mama Mary for assistance.

The guidelines that will follow in the next chapters will hopefully aid in detecting more quickly false mystics and visionaries before they do more damage to the faithful. I know of persons with good intentions who were deceived for years since no one assisted them in discernment. These guidelines, although they may assist in detecting false mystics, are not meant on their own to validate a true mystic or visionary. More are required: more study, more prayer, and when the revelations are supposed to be disseminated to the public realm, the diocesan bishop's approval. With regard to the revelations that are more public in nature, the diocesan bishop would usually create a commission to study the alleged visionary or mystic, especially if he is gaining influence in his diocese. The commission would be made up of priest theologians especially versed in dogma, liturgy, and mystical theology, psychiatrists and doctors, researchers and the like.

So to reiterate, the reader must take note that just because a person seems to pass all the guidelines that will be discussed, it does not mean that the visionary

is authentic; the devil can mimic to a certain degree the criteria, hence the need for specialists and experts to scrutinize carefully the alleged mystic with these guidelines as well as other guidelines of the Church not mentioned here. These guidelines can therefore be of use to the reader to make an initial inquiry to detect pseudo-mystics but is not intended to authenticate true visionaries and mystics. Only the legitimate authority, after careful study with competent support, can make the final verdict.

Some Basic Signs of a True Mystic

A true mystic will always obey the authorities of the Church because Jesus himself established her authority.[32] The authority when it comes to supposed mystical phenomena, depending upon the degree of publicity, could either be the bishop of a diocese, the superior of a congregation, the parish priest of the parish, the spiritual director of a soul, etc. With regard to a mystic or, we may say, visionary who receives private revelations that are supposed to be disseminated to the public, the diocesan bishop is the sole authority to make a statement for or against it and obedience of the supposed mystic is a sign favorable to the revelation; disobedience automatically proves that the supposed revelations to a person are not of God.

Saints who experienced many mystical phenomena, like Padre Pio, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Faustina Kowalska, St. Catherine of Siena, and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque were models of obedience; actually one cannot be a saint without obedience to the Church.

"Not only do I desire that you should do what your Superior commands, but also that you should do nothing of all that I request of you without their consent. I love obedience, and without it no one can please me" (Words of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary).

"Listen, my daughter, and do not lightly believe and trust every spirit, for Satan is angry and will try to deceive you. So do nothing without the approval of those who guide you. Being thus under the authority of obedience, his efforts against you will be in vain, for he has no power over the obedient" (Words of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary).

With those saints who had revelations from Jesus himself, Jesus always instructed them of obedience to the superior even when they sometimes went against his own directives. This is a very clear sign that God puts obedience as an integral virtue to being holy. A Catholic always has the confidence that God will always guide us through his Church. Therefore, anyone who disobeys the Church with a supposed mystical revelation, thinking that he knows better is not only sinning in pride and disobedience, thinking that he is a better standard on

what is true than the Church which Jesus divinely instituted but also falls quickly into the hands of the devil who is the master deceiver. With regard to mystical phenomena, the number one rule is humility manifested through obedience since without help from God, the devil can very easily trick even the most intelligent person in the world.

The False Mystic, Sr. Magdalena of the Cross

The life of a false mystic named Sr. Magdalena de la Cruz,[33] which will be narrated, is a very important warning about being misled by false visionaries and mystics.

Sr. Magdalena of the Cross[34] *(Magdalena de la Cruz) was born in Córdoba (Cordova) in Andalusia, Spain in 1487.*

Not even the great St. Teresa of Avila would ever have as much prestige across Spain in her lifetime as Sr. Magdalena of the Cross! Her (apparent) outstanding piety and the miracles that she performed were known throughout Spain, and even much of Europe. So much so that even the Emperor Charles V, the sovereign ruler of the Roman and Spanish Empire, asked for a piece of the habit of Magdalena of the Cross to wrap around the future Prince Philip II at his birth.

But for now, little Magdalena is just five years old, and she is already known in town for her remarkable devotion, which is out of the ordinary for a girl of her age. Not long after her fifth birthday, she is praying in church when she hears music of remarkable sweetness. Then a beautiful young man, with thick, black hair, appears to her, wearing a mantle so brilliant that she has to close her eyes. Hearing the story, some believe it to be Jesus. News of this event spreads throughout Córdoba, and many want to see little Magdalena.

Little Magdalena is living a simple life with her folks who were poor artisans, and while Magdalena remains of exemplary modesty and conduct, the visions continue, one after another, and as time goes on, this attracts the attention of many so much so that one day she flees her home to take refuge in a nearby cave, where she once again falls into ecstasy. When she awakens, she discovers that she has been miraculously transported back to her bed by her guardian angel.

Soon, a person whom she believes to be Jesus appears to her and asks her to somewhat moderate her asceticism, so as not to compromise her fragile childhood health. He informs her that a great destiny awaits her, and that she will need her strength. She flies to the church to thank Jesus and on the way meets a man with a severe limp who asks her to lend him her hand to climb the church steps. He has hardly climbed a few steps when he stands erect and with

great surprise and excitement, he dashes through the whole town crying out that he is healed!

Soon afterwards, like Jesus after the cure of the blind man, Magdalena is subjected to all sorts of interrogations to discover any subterfuge, none of which can apparently be found. Not long afterwards, a mute person also allegedly receives his speech through her intercession.

In 1497 at the age of ten, Magdalena is already quite beautiful, and in her purity, she is very cautious to hide herself under long black dresses and skirts. Even so, she still finds herself too beautiful, and one day for penance, she tries to crucify herself on the wall of her bedroom. She starts by nailing her two feet, then her left hand. Blood flows and she faints from the atrocious pain. Her flesh tears and, falling heavily onto a chest, she breaks two ribs. Her parents call the doctor and he bandages all of her nail wounds, yet she is burning with desire to suffer terribly for the reparation of sins, and she repeatedly takes off the bandages, so as to suffer more. But this soon makes her very ill.

On Easter Saturday, 1497, Magdalena is bedridden and seems to be dying, probably because of infection from the wounds of her failed crucifixion. At midnight, she lets out a great scream, sits up on her bed, and once more rips off her dressings, saying that she is healed. She says that it is Jesus himself who has just appeared to her and has cured her.

Three months before her First Holy Communion, Magdalena seemingly stops eating. The pleadings of her poor parents make no difference; she fasts right up until the Sunday of her First Holy Communion, surprisingly without losing her healthy appearance. On the day of the ceremony, at the precise moment of consecration, she lets out another cry and prostrates herself for a long time. When she exits the church, she explains that the Lord himself put the Eucharist in her mouth, without her needing to approach the priest.

At sixteen, Magdalena continues to astound many with her apparent extraordinary devotion and her remarkable desire to make reparation for sin. Many see her as a living saint—for who else but a saint could do such extraordinary penances? When she whips herself to bleeding point while doing penance, her wounds are miraculously healed the next day to everyone's great surprise. She is healthy, and everything about her seems wholesome, except two fingers which have not grown like the others: at sixteen, they are no larger than the size of a child's pinky. Some say that these two fingers are those that Christ touched one night in her childhood, during an apparition.

In 1504, at age 17, Magdalena at last obtains what seems to be the great desire of her life: to become a Franciscan nun—a spiritual daughter of St. Francis and St. Claire. Because of her reputation for holiness, she is joyfully admitted to the Franciscan convent of St. Elizabeth of the Angels in Cordova (Convento de Santa Isabel de los Ángeles), and she soon edifies and inspires the admiration of many of the nuns.

There are, however, some "red flags" though. She is seemingly not too

discreet about her spiritual life and merits; she inflicts severe mortifications upon herself, carries a heavy cross all around the convent, kisses her companions' feet, and she seemingly stops eating completely, apparently living only on Holy Communion. All of these facts are cause for some concern, but she does seem very devout and is willing to do even the most menial and unwanted tasks, so her "extravagances" are for the most part downplayed, at least for now.

After a few years as a postulant, in 1509, at age 22, she already has a reputation for sainthood, and because of this, it is thought prudent to let her take her vows alone. The event is greatly anticipated and well prepared. All of the nobles seek to obtain a good place in the church and to add even more glory to the great day, the Archbishop himself has his throne covered by a dais of richly embroidered velvet.

At last, the day of the ceremony arrives. Magdalena will now be known as Sister Magdalene of the Cross, in memory of the heroic crucifixion of her youth. The ceremony begins and she comes forward and kneels outside the sanctuary, and waits to hear the Cardinal's speech. But rather than exhort the novice to the practice of Christian virtue and piety, as is usual, he publicly asks her for her prayers and protection in support of himself and the diocese.

Afterwards at the Kyrie Eleison, something very remarkable happens: a dove, which seems to descend straight from the high cathedral ceiling, catches the eye of everyone. The dove lands on Magdalena's shoulder, and seems to speak into her ear. Afterwards, it ascends up to a parapet, and remains there as if watching until the end of the ceremony. Afterwards, it flies outside of the church and those who run out to follow it see it rise almost straight up, and for so long, that the sky finally seems to close over it. The news of these events spreads like wildfire across the country and even spills outside its borders.

As the weeks and months progress after her solemn profession, Sr. Magdalene de la Cruz (as she is now known) soon exhibits extraordinary faculties. Without ever going outside the walls, she seemingly knows many things that happen in Cordoba and elsewhere, particularly in the neighboring Franciscan convent, and also in the aristocratic and noble homes in Cordoba. As in the past she continues to go into ecstasy often, and if she happens to be out of her cell while doing so, her companions carry her to her cell then withdraw discreetly. Sometimes their curiosity gets the better of them and they listen not far away and often hear a gentle muttering of unknown words and also moans of suffering, too.

As can be expected, the gossip around all of these remarkable events swells and continues to spill outside of Spain. Correspondence floods the convent; people from all over are petitioning Magdalena of the Cross for her prayers and spiritual help. Generous donations pour in also, and Magdalena's convent is buzzing like a beehive with activity.

It is at this time that another prodigious mystical gift of Sr. Magdalena

appears: she can seemingly predict the future. In 1515, she announces the death of King Ferdinand for the following year, which comes to pass as foretold.

Next come some incidents that would clearly be seen as theologically unsound but the continued brainwashing of the people around this sister has already made them spiritually blind.

On March 25, 1518, the day of the Feast of the Annunciation, Magdalena discreetly tells her Abbess some news which fills the pious woman with great confusion and perplexity—Magdalena states that on the preceding night, that is, the solemn Vigil of the Annunciation, she had conceived the child Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus Magdalene of the Cross, the shining light of the convent of St. Elizabeth of the Angels, is pregnant.

Foreseeing the enormous scandal that such news would inevitably provoke, the Abbess orders Magdalena to keep absolutely quiet about it for now, while she prays for guidance as to how to proceed. As the days pass, the Abbess discreetly watches Magdalena and, after a few weeks, she is obliged to bow to the obvious evidence, for Magdalena's abdomen is noticeably rounding out, and the moment is going to come when they will no longer be able to hide this "work" of the Holy Spirit... or of nature?

The nuns are all informed of the situation, and soon the convent is divided into two camps. On the one side, there are those who doubt the miraculous conception, some perhaps because they feel a hidden envy for Magdalena. Others because it is such an extraordinary thing that has never happened outside of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and there is nothing in Sacred Scripture that would point to such a second birth of Jesus into this world.

On the other side, there are those, also numerous, who say that God works in mysterious ways, and that the Most High has been pouring all sorts of extraordinary graces on his humble servant for many years. Understandably, they cannot fathom how she could have possibly stained her purity; she is so seemingly devout and pious, and besides, she never leaves the convent grounds. To that, the doubters reply that she receives her confessor alone, and also that the bars on the convent fence are so widely spaced as to allow the passage of a much more cumbersome being than the Holy Spirit.

A vow of silence is agreed upon by both camps. However, some cannot help themselves and soon the extraordinary news is spreading through all of Cordova and abroad. But how does Magdalena respond? She treats all of the news and insinuations with absolute and complete indifference.

Seemingly even more devout in the practice of virtue, she redoubles the severity of her penances, walking barefoot on pieces of broken glass and lashing her back and shoulders with instruments of severe mortification, along with wearing a rough cilice discipline.

At this point, most do not yet actually doubt her sainthood, however, all these extraordinary things are, without a doubt, cause for careful discernment. And

then there are all the generous donations that have been flowing in honor of the "living saint," and the countless individuals who request her intercession and prayers... all of this tends to relegate the other sisters to a lesser position in the convent, and causes them to feel somewhat inadequate in their spirituality and the practice of virtue.

Hearing the news, the Archbishop of Seville sends three experienced matron "midwives" to examine Magdalena. Having very carefully examined her, they announce that while it is indeed true that the nun is pregnant, it is also very much a fact that her virginity is completely intact and unquestionable. Prayers of thanksgiving explode in all the churches and throughout the land, and inside the convent, the doubters and gossipers are reduced to utter silence and penances for their apparent doubts.

On Christmas Eve, 1518, Magdalena confirms that she will very soon give birth. a little house at the end of the garden is prepared for her, for in a vision her guardian angel recommends that she give birth alone, so as to suffer more without any human assistance. Magdalena remains locked up in the little house for three days, during which time the whole community remains in prayer. The story that Magdalena tells when she comes out is absolutely prodigious.

She relates that during Christmas night, at midnight, she gives birth to a magnificent baby who radiates so much light that she can see as if it were high noon. The cold air of her chamber is suddenly miraculously heated and the divine child doesn't suffer at all from the cold.

During this time, strangely Magdalena's hair begins to grow very fast and, from crow black that it was, it changes to the brightest blond, with its long length allowing her to swaddle the infant child in it, and keep him warm in the softest of tunics.

As proof of the miracle, she cuts a few of her blond curls before her hair turns back to normal. The nuns then compete for a few of the miraculous hairs to keep as precious relics.

Continuing with the story of the remarkable birth, Sr. Magdalene de la Cruz states that on the morning after Christmas, she found herself alone, the beautiful little child gone, but with her breast chapped from suckling him, along with all of the stigmata of recent delivery still on her body. Soon the matron midwives are sent again to check on the veracity of these facts and to verify that Magdalena's virginity has not suffered from the event. A solemn "Te Deum" is then sung in the cathedral and donations flow in like never before.

A few people continue to gossip, however, so in an attempt to put a definitive end to the calumnies, an exorcist monk arrives at the convent one morning, while the nun is in ecstasy. He approaches her and pushes two long needles in her body, one into her foot, and the other into her hand. The needles penetrate deeply, yet Magdalena remains perfectly insensitive to them, without any reaction whatsoever, which confirms in the minds of many that her ecstasies are authentic. When the needles are withdrawn, a little stream of blood flows from

the wounds.

In spite of this proof, Sr. Magdalena is subjected to another test, this time concerning her abstinence from food; it is a fast which she allegedly has been carrying out for eleven years. It was being insinuated that certain novices were secretly bringing her food.

So the Abbess then requests that a vigilant guard of two monks from the nearby Franciscan monastery be positioned at the entrance to Magdalena's cell with a 24-hour watch; the two monks take turns with others in a rotating schedule. Additionally, she even orders that the window shutters of the chamber be nailed shut. After a few days, it is discovered that Magdalena has suddenly disappeared. They look for her everywhere, and soon find her in the completely opposite part of the garden, asleep near a fountain. The monks assure the Abbess that they have not relaxed their surveillance for an instant. For her part, Sr. Magdalena reveals that it is St. Francis himself who transported her to this place. Of course, nobody is able to give any explanation for this prodigy, and it is concluded that this is but another miracle in the extraordinary life of Sr. Magdalena of the Cross.

At this point, Sr. Magdalena now has a greater prestige than the Abbess herself. She is consulted for all the major decisions that need to be taken by the community. Her advice is even sought from outside, by great and small alike, and soon Magdalena and the other nuns who have befriended her are better informed of what is happening in the city than the Archbishop himself.

In 1523, the Archbishop is in need of a new cathedral, and because of the abundant donations sent to Sr. Magdalena, her convent of St. Elizabeth of the Angels is the richest in Spain, and is able to furnish by far the greatest part of the money needed for its construction. Because of this, Sr. Magdalena is consulted on the new cathedral's appearance.

And so it is that for twenty-nine years, Magdalena's notoriety has grown in proportion to her alleged virtues, and she has led an existence which, although full of sometimes astounding events, has contributed for the most part in a positive way to the convent's enrichment through her practice of virtue and the apparent signs from heaven which inspire the faithful. Always seemingly pious and disposed to sacrifice, she inspires and fascinates the Spanish high clergy, and many feel that she should have a higher position in the convent more suited to her merits. It is suggested that she should become the Abbess, since as time passes, the current Abbess is becoming infirm. In a show of alleged humility, Magdalena protests and she uses her poor administrative abilities as a reason, stating, "Let them elect Sr. Isabella of the Holy Trinity instead."

However, many of her fellow nuns want her as abbess so much that on February 17, 1533, Magdalena is elected Abbess, in the presence of the Order's Superior, by forty-four votes as opposed to the seven given to Isabella of the Holy Trinity.

With Magdalena now in charge, in the beginning life in the convent hardly

changes, except that Mother Magdalena seems to have a strong penchant for the practice of severe penances, and she exhorts her religious sisters to do likewise. In doing so, the new Abbess sometimes provokes very difficult scenes.

We see now the beginning of extreme forms of penances entering the community setting which is a sign of the demonic.

And so it is that during Confession, the sisters, by hypocrisy or fear of too difficult penances, now usually only accuse themselves of small faults. Hearing of this, Mother Magdalena enters into holy wrath which soon causes unspeakable fear into her sisters. She orders them to admit to more severe sins, and the poor nuns become frightened by the severity of the Abbess. Some burst into tears, and there are a couple of others who astonishingly go into a sort of semi-possession, rolling on the floor and arching their bodies, before slowly returning back to normal.

To reprimand the more guilty ones for their alleged spiritual weaknesses, the Abbess orders some to crawl on their knees in the refectory and make the sign of the cross with their tongues on the shoes of all the assembled nuns.

Soon, the confessions of the nuns are more to Mother Magdalena's liking, supposedly revealing the sisters' true state of sin. Penances are now measured to the alleged gravity of the faults, for according to Abbess Magdalena, it is necessary to totally expiate sins, and to succeed in this endeavor, the common cord whip disciplines are replaced with iron tipped ones.

As for the manner and the times in which the discipline (i.e., scourge or lash/whip) should be applied, the Abbess modernizes it. Before, when the occasion came for extreme penance and use of the discipline (i.e., scourge or lash/whip), the candles were extinguished, so that no one else could see the nuns who chose to use this form of severe mortification. It was the nuns' own choice to do so, and it was done in darkness so that no one might know who is choosing to discipline themselves. This is to preserve the nuns' humility.

But from now on, Mother Magdalena orders that the candles are to remain lit, and the nuns are given all the necessary time to openly whip themselves in the performance of bodily mortification and penance, in the full light and presence of the other nuns. Knowing that Mother Magdalena was being guided by the devil at this time (which we shall soon see), it is assumed that these extraordinary penances were an attempt by the devil to instill spiritual pride in some of the nuns, and discouragement and despair in others.

We now begin to see one of the signs of the demonic: if a person is mediocre in his spiritual life, the devil brings the person to more and more laxity, but if a person is zealous, the devil tries to bring the person to the other extreme, which is overzealousness, to burn him out. In the next episode, we see extreme forms of mortification while the later episode manifests moves towards laxity which is a clear sign of the demonic.

The nuns are now encouraged to remain on their knees on boards garnished with rounded iron nailheads; they are encouraged to wear cilices or belts with small iron spikes pointing inwards and are encouraged to stretch out in doorways so that the others nuns can walk upon them; and some wear a crown made of thorns. Yet these extreme severities seemingly do not harm the outward devotion of most of the community to their new Abbess. She is twice reelected with the majority of the votes. No one dares, it seems, to question her authority and power within the community.

Yet, surprisingly, the Abbess Magdalena of the Cross relaxes some long-standing rules of the Order that have existed for centuries. This, of course, causes concern first and foremost among the other Franciscan communities in her Order, and also with the Archbishop and the priests within the local Church itself. Yet, as in the past, her reputation for holiness goes before her, and she is allowed to relax many rules of the Order within her own convent.

Apparently because of her "saintliness," St. Francis, the founder of her Order, allegedly appears to her one night and dispenses her from having to go to Confession in the future.

And for the confessions of her fellow nuns, she explains that it is an insult to them to be separated from their confessor by a grille. In her opinion, they are to sit face to face with the confessor. This causes quite a stir among not only the sisters, but also with the priests themselves, as such a practice is unheard-of throughout Catholic Spain at that time.

Additionally, Mother Magdalena of the Cross authorizes the sisters to no longer fast on Fridays "so as to be able to support even greater mortifications." It is the belief of many of her fellow sisters that this great reform of the Franciscan Order that she is undertaking will bring new prosperity to the convent, and to the Order itself. It is no wonder then that within a couple of decades the great Spanish reformer and mystic, the Carmelite St. Teresa of Avila, would face such heavy opposition to the reforms that she was endeavoring to instill within the Carmelite Order in Spain only a few years later.

She immediately wants the young nuns and novices to confess to her at night in her cell. This most recent innovation, of course, causes even more murmurs and doubts, particularly from Isabella of the Holy Trinity who still hasn't forgotten being beaten by Magdalena in the 1533 elections, and on whom Magdalena (as Abbess) has inflicted the severest humiliations ever since.

Yet, amidst these troubling new reforms and directives from Mother Magdalena, the admiration that she receives from the greats of her time seems to easily blunt any criticisms—for Queen Isabella of Spain herself sends Mother Magdalena her portrait and beseeches Magdalena for her prayers, and also the Archbishop of Seville often writes to her, and in his letters he calls her "the happiest creature in the world," presumably because of all the alleged heavenly graces that she supposedly receives.

The noblest ladies, while pregnant and nearing their deliveries, would send the layette to be blessed by her, as did the Empress Isabel before the birth of Philip II. When, in 1535, the Emperor Charles V was starting from Barcelona for the expedition to Tunis, he sent his banner to Cordova that she might bestow on it her blessing.

And so it is that the revelations and prodigies that direct and guide Mother Magdalena seem to cause her to make decisions that are more and more contestable and disconcerting. And now once again she reveals more troubling revelations one morning: "The Holy Virgin has appeared to me and led me about the corridors last night. She smiled at you, Sister, "and then gazing at one of those who had been opposing her," "but she only gave a long look of scorn to you."

Understandably, these revelations strongly displease those who are the victims. Their protestations join those of the families who, outside, see their daughters refused entrance into the convent, because, for example, one of their ancestors was perhaps Jewish. Mother Magdalena, of course, receives her information from the Holy Virgin herself, but in the families, indignation and anger provoke the growing attitude of doubt concerning the supposed heavenly guidance received by the Abbess.

During the next elections for Abbess, Mother Magdalena receives only a handful of votes, and Isabella of the Holy Trinity is elected by a large margin.

With doubts continuing to mount, Magdalena is again suspected of receiving food clandestinely, as she is still said to be fasting on a daily basis for over thirty years now. Add to this, one day, a little iron box containing Communion wafers is brought to the Abbess. This box, found under Magdalena's bed, seems to prove that the miracle of spontaneous Communion, repeated many times in the past, has been just a trick.

In 1543, she falls gravely ill. This seems a good occasion for the Abbess to oblige her to make a general confession of her entire life. But at the moment when the confessor puts his stole on in preparation for her confession, Magdalena immediately goes into convulsions. The priest suspects a demonic presence, so he sends for a doctor whom he knows to be also well versed in the spiritual life. He examines Magdalena and notices that during one of her ecstasies, Magdalena's eyes do not remain fixed, which is one of the distinctive marks of real ecstasies. However, he stabs her with a needle and obtains no reaction. But when he wisely dips the needle in holy water, Magdalena lets out a moan. This immediately draws suspicion and concern that Sr. Magdalena may be infested or even possessed by a demon.

As time progresses, Magdalena's illness continues to get worse. Seemingly out of character, she is now worried, and often asks the doctor to keep her informed on the evolution of her illness. One December day, she hears: "You are dying. You will not see another Christmas." Greatly anguished, Magdalena suddenly twists on her bed and then rises up and lets out mysterious words,

"1544! ... The forty years as announced! I am a cursed dog! Take me to Hell!"

Then she falls back into her bed and begins uttering revolting blasphemies before suddenly being taken from her bed by an invisible force and held in mid-air. She then falls heavily onto the bed several times, but apparently without hurting herself.

After some reflection, the Abbess decides to have a very old and experienced priest, Rev. Don Juan of Cordova, called in, and she asks him to examine and, if need be, exorcise Magdalena immediately. Not long after visiting Magdalena, the old man looks at her and orders, "I order you in the Name of Jesus to leave this poor woman and dare to say your name!"

The demon first lets out a terrible cry in which the name "Balban" is recognized. Later during exorcisms, it was discovered that another demon named "Patorrio" was also influencing her. The demonic laughing intensifies and the words uttered are horrible. The demon glories in all the disorder that he has been able to cause over so many years in the convent, and swears that he will return...

Thus the Rev. Don Juan of Cordova is able to establish at least a solid case of demonic infestation, and perhaps even possession, and the news spreads first among the nuns, and soon afterwards among the clergy and townspeople of Cordova, and later throughout the whole of Spain. The following day however, the Provincial of the Franciscans goes in person to the dying nun's bedside. He remains there for several hours and receives a complete confession, of which he says nothing. Yet all those who meet him afterwards notice that he is carrying a very heavy burden, a frightful secret, a nightmare which has been a whole lifetime, the lifetime of the "saint" Magdalena of the Cross, the diabolic Abbess of Cordova.

Next, an Inquisitor is sent to investigate the thorny matter by the express order of Cardinal Juan Pardo de Tavera, the Primate of Spain. He is much younger than the Rev. Don Juan of Cordova and he inspires her with confidence. She reveals to him that the beautiful dark-haired young man who appeared to her at the age of five was in fact the devil. He had promised her fame and the respect of everyone, if she would consent to obey him always.

It is also satan who leaves his mark by touching her two fingers which, from then forward, stop growing. And it is also he who teaches her the subterfuge of the wafers, and he assists her with the simulation of ecstasies. Her cries in the night are in no way inspired by the ecstatic love that she has for the Creator, but by the demon's evil caresses.

Upon hearing such disconcerting admissions, the Inquisitor is horrified and almost instinctively he makes the sign of the cross upon himself. Immediately, Sr. Magdalena starts to insult the priest with vile and abhorrent words. She then begins to roll around the floor in her cell, and bites anything she can, while striking indecent poses and mimicking the vile copulations that she has performed with Balban for nearly forty years.

Because he is an experienced Inquisitor, the good monk had asked the older, more experienced nuns to stay in the corridor to write down the fallen Magdalena's words, so as to be able to document and later serve as witnesses. From here, Sr. Magdalena de la Cruz's case is well documented and quickly prepared.

During the extended course of interrogations that were part of the ongoing exorcism during which Balban is very reluctantly dislodged from Magdalena, it is discovered that the most wicked and hideous means were used to undermine Magdalena's soul as a child. It was believed that he originally chose her because she was in fact very pious and devoted to God, and so in his terrible wickedness, he earnestly sought to despoil God of one of his favorites. But, we shall soon see how God wins triumphantly in the end.

During the ongoing exorcisms, it is learned that when Magdalena became a young adult, the demon Balban ceased to appear to her as a beautiful young man, as he had been doing since she was age five. One night, when the young girl was waiting for him as usual, he presented himself to her in the form of a shimmering mist which condenses and takes the form of a very tall man with long hair, who radiates a reddish light.

She cries out "Jesus," but this, of course, greatly displeases Balban, who lifts her with his burning hand and drops her on the ground. She is then forced to contemplate this horrid creature who now rises before her in a horrible metamorphosis, from a man into a vile beast.

The infernal creature is repulsive and the possessed nun describes in horror his wide, flat nose, his twisted horns, and his toothless mouth. He commanded her to immediately become his wife, and he assures her that she will not lose her virginity, and he promises that her apparent sainthood would only grow in measure with the supposed unimaginable pleasures that she would enjoy with him. Lacking in spiritual fortitude, vanquished, Magdalena then gives in, and it is again the dark-haired, and very attractive young man that she now receives in her.

Next, she confesses that it was also the devil who came to feed her in secret, and that she had really been pregnant by him. She had been told by him that she risked nothing if she followed his instructions. It was to play a joke by troubling the minds of the nuns and the Spanish clergy and laity that he had made her pregnant with a monstrous caterpillar, which escaped from her body with a loud wind that famous Christmas night, before changing into Balban, and repossessing her with unprecedented vigor.

And so it is that the whole of Christendom discovers with horror that she, of whom most everyone thought was God's most-beloved, was in fact the most-beloved creature of the devil. Yet some of Sr. Magdalena's contemporaries were not so easily fooled by her false mysticism, like the great St. Ignatius Loyola who was incredulous and in 1541, it is said that he severely reproved Martin de la Santa Cruz, who endeavored to win him over towards Sr. Magdalena, for

accepting exterior signs without seeking for the true interior ones; and the great St. John of Avila (who is soon to be declared a Doctor of the Church) was also very skeptical and, when he was in Cordova, he was discreetly denied access to her.

As for the once-renowned Sr. Magdalena de la Cruz, now fully exorcised and free of the demons Balban and Patorrio who are forced to reveal that they are leaving forever the body and soul of the possessed woman, she is then judged by the religious tribunal on May 3, 1546.

The Grand Inquisitor of the religious tribunal is Cardinal Jimenez, now the Primate of Spain, appointed by Isabella of Castile herself, and it is because of this that Magdalena is transferred to the Alcazar prisons to be further interrogated.

Sr. Magdalena is now sixty-one years old and she is extraordinarily repentant for all that she has done and she begs the court to put a rapid end to her torments and deliver her to the purifying flames. The judges, however, decide otherwise. Because of her great age, her sincere confessions, and the quality of her repentance, her deserved sentence is greatly mitigated. And rightfully so, they consider her to be a pitiful victim of the demon and perhaps they remember well the days of her glory when they, too, had exalted in having what was believed to be such an extraordinary saint in their midst. And so the inquisitors place a large portion of the blame on the demons Balban and Patorrio, most especially Balban, and not so much on Magdalena herself, since she was just an inexperienced youth when the demon(s) began influencing her.

The Catholic Church relies on the principle that divine works are eternal and infinite. Those of the demon, on the other hand, are always limited in time and space. If Magdalena confesses, it is because, in 1544, her pact with the devil has arrived at its end. It is fear of hell, as she says herself, which precipitates her revelations. And it is also God, who in his infinite love and mercy, inspires all of her admissions, and inspires and guides her deep repentance. And it is God who assures her that she will live if she confesses. She would become even more a heroine in repentance than she was in false virtue and fame.

She abjures and repents in tears, in front of the cathedral that she had had raised, thanks to her deceptions in union with the demons Balban and Patorrio. She is also ordered to go to a different Franciscan convent in Burgos, where she lives long years of repentance and expiation without ever falling again into the slightest error.

At a young age, Magdalena succumbed to a great pride and a false demonic promise that offered her prestige and power. But the great and small of her time were all later sure that her final deep humility and repentance had made her quite worthy of Paradise. Sr. Magdalena de la Cruz died in 1560 at the age of 74.

The great lawyer and writer, Maurice Garcon, for whom Magdalena is an important historical figure, documents how she was in fact very well known

throughout Christendom in the 16th and 17th centuries, and how many of the theological and demonological treatises make precise and detailed references to her case. In fact, during this period, the many facts presented in theological books concerning demonic influences are illustrated by the statements and documents drawn from her trial.

For those who study the lives of visionaries and the mystics of the Church, Magdalena's extraordinary yet fraudulent mystical life replete with numerous alleged supernatural and mystical gifts that almost perfectly mimic the ones given to authentic mystics should serve as a very grave warning of how the devil can ape and mimic God's works, and can be exceedingly convincing while doing so.

I would end this narrative with lessons from the author of this article.

The important missing element which allowed for the ongoing demonic deceptions in the life of Sr. Magdalena was the absence of a priest spiritual director to guide and discern her alleged mystical gifts and supernatural graces. ***Obedience is the "litmus test" of the Church****, and it seems that Sr. Magdalena was never subjected to obedience to a spiritual director. Had she been, the demonic deceptions would certainly have been detected much sooner. Mystics and visionaries should always be guided by a priest spiritual director, and it should always be the priest who directs the mystic, and NOT the mystic who directs the priest. A priest spiritual director represents Christ and his authority within the Church, and therefore mystical and supernatural graces should be subjected to this authority to help discern their authenticity.*

For sure, another one of the spiritual lessons is that ***all that glitters is not necessarily gold, and the devil does not counterfeit tin or copper, or even silver—he seeks to counterfeit gold.*** *So we need to be very careful, with the help of God, not to be misled by his phony deceptions.*

Discernment of Mystical Phenomena Part II

"Beloved, do not trust every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God."

—1 John 4:1

"Now the Spirit explicitly says that in the last times some will turn away from the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and demonic instructions."

—1 Timothy 4:1

The Discernment of Spirits

We must not simply put our trust that it is of God, when we encounter and experience mystical phenomena. It is God's will that we always discern the spirits; if it is truly of him or not.

Satan is known as the greatest of deceivers; he is not called by that name for nothing. He will come and assault man first and foremost as a master con artist and for this reason we must always be extremely discerning and watchful.

It is known that the devil appeared to St. Padre Pio as a young friend of the monks, as Provincial Father of the monks, as Pope Pius X, as a guardian angel, as St. Francis of Assisi, and even as Mama Mary. Even St. Ignatius of Loyola, the master of discernment, experienced this; he had an "apparition" of the Lord during the early years of his conversion and only in the second "apparition" did he unmask the deception.

As head of the Commission on Extraordinary Phenomena for the Archdiocese of Manila and serving for years as an exorcist, I have come upon so many sad cases of good-intentioned persons who were duped by the devil as he entered into their lives with "signs and wonders." These people thought that they were being guided by God, through their supposed mystical experiences or through visionaries/mystics, only to find out later that it was the devil who was guiding them. These persons paid the price of lost time, energy, and money, not to

mention the effect on their spiritual lives in fruitless endeavors; with them living without the guidance of the Church, I saw how the devil toyed with them.

We must remember that the devil will always come in the beginning with a lot of seemingly good plans and benefits. In the end, since he is a liar and murderer from the beginning, he will not only destroy the little good that is gained but destroy all the other goods of the person, including his relationship with God, the main target of the devil. These people later ask me, "Why did God allow this to happen?"

Of course, in the end, God brought forth good from their experiences but the lesson here is that one cannot judge for oneself mystical phenomena. If only they sought guidance from the Church from the very beginning, the damage would have been blocked, if not minimized. Some persons discover only later that they have already become part of a cult when all the while they thought that they were following a "saintly visionary and mystic." For the sake of those who are truly seeking guidance from the Church when they encounter the so-called visionaries, miracle workers, and mystics, I have come out with these guidelines so that at least these may make them think twice about whether these people are truly led by the divine spirit or by a lying spirit.

The following guidelines are primarily meant to aid in the discernment of private revelations that are meant for the public, that is, locutions and visions meant not only for the person receiving them but are also meant for others. In my ministry, I have met too many groups that were led by a deceiving spirit (through a human agent) that caused confusion, division, false teachings, and led to a drifting away from the faith and a true relationship with God. These deceiving spirits used counterfeit charisms and pseudo-miracles to lead persons astray. A Catholic, to be more discerning, must have at least a rudimentary knowledge of the discernment of spirits and when he has certain questions, he must seek the assistance of the Church, particularly a priest steeped in the knowledge of mystical theology and rooted in the virtues of prudence and humility.

Before we go any further, it is necessary to be clear as to when the discernment of spirits is used. Discernment of spirits is mainly used for three experiences in the spiritual life.

1. First, it is used on the supposed inspirations (promptings) that one receives in one's day-to-day life. For example, a person may be inspired suddenly to begin a project for the poor; but is this from the Lord or not? Although it seems good, if the one who was inspired is already a professed cloistered nun, the supposed "inspiration" cannot be from God. The Lord does not give inspirations that will become an obstacle to the primary vocation the Lord has called one to. Thus a married person can never be inspired by God to live like a hermit.

2. Secondly, discernment is used when, especially in prayer, one experiences

consolations (that bring ease and delight in praying) and desolations (that bring dryness and difficulty in praying) and there is a need to see where they come from so that one is able to respond accordingly. It is important to discern where these consolations and desolations are coming from and what they really mean.

3. Finally, discernment of spirits is used with regard to mystical phenomena, particularly miracles and revelations, which consist of locutions and visions; they can be more public in character when they affect a greater number of people. We will be focusing on this type of discernment. Additionally, the principles that will be expounded will focus less on the discernment of miracles and more on discerning private revelations.

The discernment is always whether the phenomenon comes from God, the devil, or merely ourselves. With regard to the first two situations where discernment of spirits is needed, St. Ignatius of Loyola, the master of discernment, has a lot to teach us about them and his teachings on discernment should therefore be an essential guide on these two spiritual experiences.

But before we focus on the third use for the discernment of spirits, I would just like to give a few guidelines for using the discernment of spirits for the first two situations; this can help us especially when we are experiencing different movements within ourselves. The following are general guidelines only.

Principle No. 1 — In prayer, one must discern the movements of one's heart to be able to know and respond to God's will. Unless we know the source of a supposed inspiration that we receive in prayer, whether it is from God, the devil, or one's own person, we will be hard-pressed in following the will of God in our lives. We will make many mistakes with regard to the proper choices in life.

— If my thoughts and feelings, especially during prayer, make me more focused and centered on my own ego or make me more self-absorbed, this is not the spirit of God acting on the soul. The spirit of God always brings one to focus more and more beyond oneself to the Transcendent God. Hence, if a person says that he received consolations in prayer but ends up self-righteous and proud afterwards, the source of the consolation was clearly not the divine spirit. How do we recognize the devil's actions? We end up with a preoccupation with oneself (which can bring about fears, doubts, and confusion). To bring quality to our prayer time, it is important to discern where our hearts are being led so that we may either continue praying or stop and refocus.

"It is a mark of the Evil Spirit to take on the appearance of an angel of light. He begins by whispering thoughts that are suited to a devout soul, and ends by suggesting his own" (St. Ignatius of Loyola).

— Concerning peace, not all peace points to the movements of the Holy Spirit. If the peace is merely centered on the lower faculties, that is, the peace of the "old man" or the concupiscence in us and not the peace of the spirit or the "new man" in us which is a much deeper type of peace, then the divine spirit is not the one acting in us. An example would be a person with a dead conscience and because he has lived for many years in the state of sin and it does not bother him at all, then he experiences "peace," but it is only of the flesh.

Struggle is part of the Christian life as one continually battles the flesh within us. St. Paul continually reminds us of the necessity to overcome the old man in us. So for a Catholic who struggles continually for holiness of life, the body may be in extreme tension at certain times but the spirit is at peace because it is united with the Spirit of God. The peace of the old man and the new man can now be better discriminated upon (sensual peace vs. interior or spiritual peace). When we are discerning between two choices and have made a choice, check that the peace within us is the peace of the spirit.

Let us also test ourselves on this point; daily tribulations are sufficient to prove spiritual perfection. Whoever can bear trials and tribulations with peace and serenity in one's spirit because of one's faith is spiritually mature.

— Desolation in prayer can come from God or the devil. When God allows desolation, it is called instructive desolation; he withdraws the sensible (feeling) effect of grace but the grace remains in the soul (it is desolate but not disturbed since there is still interior peace). The person continues to bear spiritual fruit despite the desolation. We see this in the life of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. This desolation purifies our love and makes it selfless. The devil, on the other hand, sows desolation through sadness, despair, confusion, and turmoil. We never allow our actions or thoughts to be influenced by demonic desolation but must combat them immediately. a seminarian, for example, under this type of desolation must never make the mistake of thinking that the desolation that he is experiencing means that the Lord is not calling him to the priesthood. The Lord manifests his will through gentle attraction and not through fears, inner disturbances, and anxieties.

Principle no. 2 — When a soul falls easily into mortal sins or stays long in the state of sin (a sinful lifestyle), the devil will use the senses and emotions (concupiscence) and grant them many consolations to keep the person stuck in sin and forgetful of his soul while the good spirit pricks the conscience and reason through encounters and situations like an advice from a priest friend, a homily, a visit to a dying friend, reading a spiritual classic, and the like. The Lord lovingly and gently causes tension in these areas to awaken the person to his state of soul. The Lord would also permit but never cause situations that will jar the person to awaken from his sinful state; some examples are accidents and tragedies in the person's life. When the sinner, for example, ends up in the

hospital for perhaps a few days due to an illness, this will be where grace can work the most since without the distractions of the world and the flesh, the person now perceives the desolation and vacuum deep within his soul which he did not really recognize because of the pampered flesh. On the other hand, with a soul serious in growing in holiness, the devil tries to block its progress through every kind of scruple, disquiet, and agitation, in fact, he brings about desolation that centers more on the flesh (emotions, memory, and imagination). The good spirit, on the other hand, encourages, fortifies, consoles, enlightens the understanding and spreads peace in the depths of the heart; the primary targets of the consolations are the higher faculties of man. So a person who lives a sinful life would be happy due to the pleasures of the senses and will not easily feel the desolation of his dead soul (the tactic of the devil is to keep this person forever unaware) while a saint would experience the joys of the spirit which remain in his soul despite the many challenges he may face in his life.

What is more operative in my life? Where is my happiness based? On the pleasures of the flesh or the joys of the spirit?

Discerning Private Revelations

"Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach [to you] a gospel other than the one that we preached to you, let that one be accursed!"

—Galatians 1:8

The last and definitive public revelation of God to man was given with the coming of Christ, hence there can never be any form of modification or change in the moral and doctrinal (dogma) teachings of the Church. The teachings of the Church have remained unchanged since the time of Christ; there has only been, throughout the centuries, a deepening of the understanding of these teachings and their proper application to particular times and places. Therefore, any revelation from God that occurs after the coming of Christ is called a private revelation and is meant only to remind or give emphasis with regard to a Gospel teaching for a particular time and place. For example, the revelations of the mercy of God to St. Faustina, the revelations regarding the Immaculate Heart of Mary to the children of Fatima, the revelations to St. Catherine regarding the Miraculous Medal (Medal of Mary Immaculate), or revelations of the Sacred Heart to St. Gertrude and St. Margaret Mary.

Here is a very important point to remember. Private revelation can only be of two kinds, never more. This means that God communicates to us extraordinarily (beyond inspirations and movements of the heart which were discussed at the beginning of this chapter) only in two ways, that is, either through locutions or words that are received and visions which are more of images that are seen and perceived.

Just looking at the lives of the saints, these were the only two means God used to communicate directly and extraordinarily to them. Now, for an ordinary Catholic like you and me, the Lord, as was mentioned, communicates to us basically and only through inspirations and movements of the heart and not locutions (words we hear) and visions (apparitions we see) since in this life, we move and grow by faith. These inspirations and movements of the heart are received in prayer and in our daily life. As a rule, God does not communicate with man using extraordinary means since all that we need to become saints has already been made available to us through the Church's governing, teaching, and sanctifying actions. All that we need to know, love, serve, and glorify God in order to enter heaven has already been given through the Word made flesh.

So when God chooses to speak to us extraordinarily through a visionary or mystic to give us a private revelation, this would mean that certain conditions have to be present to warrant this great gift to man since, as was mentioned, this extraordinary means of God communicating to man is an exception and not the rule. And unless these conditions as well as other criteria are present, the Church will never make a positive pronouncement regarding the message nor the visionary. The Church is very careful and vigilant in making positive pronouncements or giving a formal approval regarding private revelations gained through locutions and visions since the credibility of the Church would be affected if it made a wrong pronouncement. There is, of course, the great harm that would ensue among the faithful if the Church mistakenly approved a revelation that was demonic in origin.

The Church is well aware of the devil's power to deceive and lead astray the faithful. This is the reason why the Church is very cautious when someone states that he has a message that was given to him directly by Jesus or that he has seen the Blessed Virgin Mary. We see this with regards the formal approval of the Church on the different apparitions of our Lady throughout the past few centuries; it took a long period of time before they were finally judged worthy of belief. A more recent example are the visions of St. Faustina Kowalska of the Divine Mercy and the locutions found in her diary; it took the intervention of St. John Paul II for them to be formally approved by the Church. In discerning mystical phenomena, the Church uses the Bible, Church Tradition which includes the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and Magisterial teachings.

And if there are physical healings that accompany the revelations, these must also be studied carefully and within the context of the other guidelines to check whether they are of a supernatural nature and not merely a preternatural one since the devil can heal as we see in occultism; going back to the story of Sr. Magdalena of the Cross, one sees that she was used by the devil as an instrument of healing.

In going to the different points that can aid us in making a discernment, I use as my main resource the work of Fr. Poulain, Augustin, SJ.[35] He is a well-known master of spiritual theology who based his work on solid Catholic

foundations. I have inserted my own commentaries based on my studies and experiences in this field.

Basic guidelines in discerning private revelations:

1. The first point of the inquiry is centered on the person of the visionary or mystic.

— What are his natural qualities, both positive and negative? Check the state of his body and mind. What also are his moral qualities?
— Has this person been known to be sincere, cool-headed, and of sound judgment, being guided by reason and not by impressions? Is his mind sound or does he suffer from a mental disorder? A psychiatric evaluation would be of invaluable assistance in this regard. Does he have any illness that may be the cause of what he is experiencing?
— Morally speaking, what virtues does this person possess? What is the general level of his spiritual life from the standpoint of perfection, both before the revelation and afterwards?
— Fr. Poulain, SJ states that if before the revelation he was a person of scandalous conduct, it is not likely that God has chosen him as the recipient of his favors, except for the purpose of his conversion. But this is rare. And this conversion, I would add, will be a radical one that is evident to all.
— It can also be that a person is only of ordinary virtue when God uses him in order to found, or start a pilgrimage, or to suggest some useful undertaking. For example, the three children of Fatima. The important point, according to Fr. Poulain, SJ, is to know whether there has been much progress after the revelations. According to him, if a great advance in sanctification has been noticed, and if, further, this can be attributed to the revelations and not simply to other graces, there is a strong probability in the subject's favor. But, he adds, if on the contrary, the seer of the vision has remained at an ordinary level of virtue, his vision must be regarded with suspicion since such extraordinary means are not made use of by God to lead to a merely ordinary state of self-sacrifice. So if after the revelation, the person still continually commits mortal sin and intentional venial sins, the person of the visionary and his supposed revelations are automatically suspect.
— According to Fr. Poulain, SJ, when it is the devil who is acting, he cannot incline the soul towards solid virtues in a real and durable manner. Outwardly, the person may seem holy, but tests, for example, of the person's humility, obedience, and patience by a spiritual director would show the reality that this is merely superficial.
— When the devil is acting, little by little one would notice the appearance of exaggerations and oddities, especially in the person of the supposed visionary.

This we have seen with the case of Sr. Magdalena of the Cross. Fr. Poulain, SJ states that under the devil's influence, bodily penances will be pushed to the length of ruining the health; there will be disobedience to lawful superiors, and the devil will make the person ridiculous to those not yet under the influence or, I may say, brainwashed by the supposed visionary.

— A person who has, for many years, been deceived by a false visionary will tend to be blind or will rationalize the inconsistencies and even the scandalous behaviors of the "visionary." It would be difficult for him to accept that he has been deceived for so long and has wasted so much time, energy, and even money to support the "mystic." And, of course, the devil will already have had a strong hold on this person's mind and emotions.

— Fr. Poulain, SJ further adds that purity of conscience will degenerate into scrupulosity, whatever humility present, into sloth or discouragement while zeal will become indiscretion. These, I would say, would be manifested by both the person of the false visionary or mystic and those of his followers.

— With regard to vocation, the devil is revealed when he tries to make persons change their vocation at a time when it cannot be done. For example, "inspire" a religious to leave his vocation after the person has already made a solemn profession that was properly discerned.

— According to the author, among those virtues that a revelation should bring in its train, one that should shine forth most brilliantly, and regarding which it is that is of paramount importance to be informed, is the virtue of humility since it is the one most opposed to our nature and of which Satan has the greatest horror.

— According to the author, pride, on the contrary, is a mark of the diabolic; it shows itself by an independent spirit with regard to superiors and directors, by obstinacy in one's opinions, by the refusal to submit to the necessary examination and by anger. So, for example, in the Philippines, we may have a group led by a supposed visionary but then when the diocesan bishop creates a commission to review it, the group's members react in arrogance and anger, believing themselves superior and above suspicion. When instructions are given by the bishop to regulate the group, the members do not follow, stating that they know better since they are being led by God himself. The spiritual director given by the bishop to assist the group is forced by the members to follow their lead instead of the other way around, telling the priest that he must have faith in the visionary; they tell him that his doubts regarding the visionary are the same as doubting God himself. Such arrogance, pride, and confusion can only come from the evil one.

— With regards to the person of the visionary, the author states that it is a sign of pride, and therefore, of illusion, to have a craving to divulge the graces that we believe ourselves to have received. He adds that humility leads to their concealment, except in the somewhat rare cases of real utility. A visionary, therefore, who manifests the desire to be the center of attention is not led by

the divine spirit. Saints would always desire to remain hidden due to humility; those led by the evil one desire to even become a spectacle to those around, showing off "powers" and "signs and wonders."

— Fr. Poulain, SJ asks this important question with regards to the mystic: "Has the person taken three precautions that are regarded as indispensable for the avoidance of illusions": (a) fearing to be deceived; (b) perfect frankness with directors; and (c) abstaining from desiring these revelations?

(a) It is clear, first of all, that to believe oneself to be safe from illusions is an excellent disposition for suffering from them.

(b) Manifestation of the conscience is necessary. In such difficult matters, we must not be both judge and one of the parties concerned. The Devil dissuades us from this sincerity, for, says St. Ignatius, he is afraid to see his wiles unmasked and he abhors such an act of humility. In revenge he leads us to unbosom ourselves without any reflection to friends who have no authority over us, which enables us to put their advice aside, if it does not please us. On the other hand, humble souls avoid publicity as much as possible.

(c) The desire for revelation also exposes the soul to deception. It causes us to find a thousand subtleties by which to substantiate the visions that we believe ourselves to have had, and it excites the imagination to invent new ones.

I would like to add other points of reference.

— First, one must check: when and how did these supposed revelations begin? This is important because the presence of the occult in the beginning makes it automatically not of God. Examples are: when a person goes to Mt. Banahaw and performs a ritual to get in touch with the world of the spirits, suddenly an apparition of an angel appears to him with a message; or someone is practicing yoga meditation and repeating a mantra then suddenly hears a voice claiming to be his guardian angel. Another example would be a person in a séance suddenly states that the Blessed Virgin Mary is present and desires to give the group a message. These are not definitely of God.

— Second is to discover whether the person of the visionary is psychic or, in occult terms, has a "third eye." Demons can easily manifest themselves to such people and, of course, easily appear as a divine being. There is more probability of deception with regard to them than people who are not psychic since the demons would have difficulty manifesting to a non-psychic person. But with God, there is no difficulty to manifest to a non-psychic person since he uses supernatural power to enter into man's affairs, not merely a preternatural one which the fallen angels use.

2. The second point of inquiry has to do with the manner of communication.

— According to Fr. Poulain, SJ, if a person receives locutions and visions and we examine all the detailed circumstances that accompany them, that is, the attitudes, gestures, words, etc., do we find the dignity, the gravity, and the propriety in keeping with the Divine Majesty? Or, on the contrary, do we not perceive oddities, a grotesque deportment, convulsions, or a lack of restraint and self-control that are unworthy even of people who are merely rational and well-brought-up? I would give as an example a spectator in attendance while a supposed visionary is receiving locutions; as he watches the gestures and words of the supposed visionary, what does he feel? What are the movements of his heart? If there is disquiet, confusion, uneasiness, and uncomfortability, then this is not a good sign. Emotionalism and sensationalism present are also not good signs. Another example is that if the supposed visionary moves and acts in indecent or inappropriate ways while in "ecstasy," then the visions cannot be of God. Our God is a God of absolute grandeur, dignity, solemnity, and majesty; "the angels tremble at the holiness of Jesus," says St. Faustina.

— There is what we may call, pseudo-ecstasy; outwardly, it may seem like the ecstasy of the saints when in reality, it is merely a trance state. According to Fr. Poulain, SJ, the devil can produce alienation of the sensible faculties, trying to counterfeit the divine ecstasy. We saw this with the story of Sr. Magdalena of the Cross.

— A second point is this: as was mentioned, God communicates revelations only through locutions and visions; there is no other way. Here in our country, we have many who claim to have received divine revelations from God. By merely focusing on the manner of communication, we are able immediately to say that they cannot be of God; why? Because the manner of communication is occult in nature. It is easy to see that what is occurring is mediumship; the person is actually a medium and therefore is not an authentic visionary.

— A medium has been called by many names such as oracle, soothsayer, and channeler. To define mediumship: it is a communication while in trance to nonphysical entities. The medium falls under the control of a spirit and delivers messages from the other side. A particular type of medium is a channeler wherein the person's consciousness is displaced by another consciousness from the spirit world and the spirit uses the channeler's body, especially the voice box and/or hands (for automatic writing), to communicate with others. The voice and gestures of the channeler suddenly changes during this temporary possession to that of the entity. In the Philippines, we notice mediumship very much alive, especially with regard to some communities supposedly devoted to the Sto. Niño. Neither God nor any divine being throughout salvation history ever took over the body (the lips for speaking as is seen in mediums or the hands for writing as we see in New Age automatic writing) of a person to communicate extraordinarily to the faithful. All true mystics and visionaries continue to retain their reason, with their personalities intact, when they experience extraordinary mystical experiences. The Bible

itself was written while the evangelists were in full use of their reason. The following are the relevant scripture passages as well as a few Church documents.

"Do not go to mediums… for you will be defiled by them. I, the Lord, am your God" (Leviticus 19:31).

"Should anyone turn to mediums… and follow their wanton ways, I will turn against such a one and cut him off from his people" (Leviticus 20:6).

"Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and *recourse to mediums*, all conceal a desire for power over time, history and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone" (CCC, 2116).

Neither ought he (the exorcist) to give any credence to the devil if the latter maintains that he is the spirit of some saint or of a deceased party, or even claims to be a good angel. —Rule no. 14 of the *Roman Ritual of Exorcism* (pertaining to persons whose bodies have been taken over by a spirit)

— Now, an oracle which is basically similar to a channeler is another type of medium. It is a method of divination which was popular in ancient Greece and Rome. The deities are consulted for political and military advice through a human medium who, while in a trance possession, allows the entity to speak. These oracles during the time when the known world was still pagan and animistic were known as sibyls; these were women priestesses who resided in caves believed to be the thrones of deities. The most famous place was located in Delphi, Athens. In Delphi, the priestess was called pythoness and she was a medium; she resided with snakes, which are symbols of prophecy and wisdom. The following narrative found in Acts 16:16-19 is an encounter between St. Paul and an oracular medium named Pythonissa. We see very clearly that St. Paul knew that the medium was possessed by a demon; he was not deceived even though the soothsayer was proclaiming only positive things about the apostle.

"As we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl with an oracular spirit, who used to bring a large profit to her owners through her fortune-telling. She began to follow Paul and us, shouting, 'These people are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation.' She did this for many days. Paul became annoyed, turned, and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' Then it came out at that moment. When her owners saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them to the public square before the local

authorities" (Acts 16:16-19).

3. The third point of inquiry has to do with the revelation itself.

— Fr. Poulain, SJ asks the question, "Is the revelation in full accord with the dogmas and teachings of the Church, and also with the undoubted pronouncement of history and science?" Revelations that contradict the dogmas and teachings of the Church can never be of God because he will never contradict his own Church which is the Body of Christ.
— The author adds that the Devil can restrain himself for a time; he can give himself the appearance of truth as of holiness, so as to inspire confidence. The author then makes a comparison in stating that the devil resembles those gamblers who intend to cheat; they begin by making their opponents win that they may afterwards make them lose ten times as much. Time will bring out the truth, hence the Church is never hasty when it comes to discerning revelations.
— The author continues, "Is the information received useful for our eternal salvation? We can be sure that revelations are not divine when their subject is simply the acquisition of ordinary matters that are of no use to souls. God does not go out of his way merely to satisfy curiosity. It is with revelations as with miracles: they do not occur without serious motive. They are the works not only of God's power, but of his wisdom."
— Fr. Poulain, SJ therefore is very clear in telling us that we must check the content of the revelation regarding its spiritual gravity. For example, the words of Jesus to St. Faustina found in her diary as well as the words of Mama Mary to St. Bernadette at Lourdes are not only of a very serious nature but are well measured and to the point; there are no wasted or superfluous words. So, for example, if a supposed visionary gives messages that are focused on maybe finding treasure (yes, we have a number of these cases in our office), their source is not divine.
— Following the thoughts of the author, it is therefore essential that a verdict only be made after all the messages have been given to the alleged visionary or, we may say, the revelations have ended. The Church as a rule does not make any formal pronouncements when the revelations are still continuing; imagine if the Church approved an apparition and the last message was heretical in nature! So quoting Fr. Poulain, he asks, "Have the revelations stood the test of time and scrutiny? Without this condition, the favorable judgments that may have been passed upon them are not a sufficient guarantee. We must allow events to unfold themselves and wait to pronounce an opinion until the vision has announced that the series has come to an end." So any spiritual fruit from the revelations must be enduring and not only be found in the beginning.
— According to Fr. Poulain, SJ, "A revelation is equally to be regarded with suspicion when its only object is the solving of some question that is in

dispute, whether theological, historical, or astronomic, etc. God leaves these discussions to the human intellect because we do not need them for our sanctification. Let us understand that eternal salvation is the only thing of any importance with God." The Doctor of the Church, St. John of the Cross, mentions that it is "always his (God) will that we should make use of our natural endowments."

— The author continues, "The revelation is also to be mistrusted if, although good from the spiritual point of view, it is *truism*, occurring in all ascetic writings. God would not employ such great means for such a small result." He adds, "The Devil is amusing the person with trifles until the day when, having allayed his suspicions, he can become bolder." So, for example, if the visionary gives messages that one would normally hear in a Sunday homily, this cannot be the divine spirit; there is no grave reason why God would use such extraordinary means if the ordinary means suffice.

— Another point that must be stated has to do with revelations that have to do with revealing the vices or sins of others. St. John of the Cross states that "God sometimes represents to holy souls the necessities of their neighbors, that they may pray for them or relieve them." Reviewing this statement of the saint, we can say that God may reveal the sins of others but they are revealed only to holy souls, or we may say, living saints whose prayers and sacrifices can bring real benefit to the sinner; we can also be certain that these sins are never made public by the saint since this would be a sin. On the other hand, the saint adds, "He [the Devil] is wont occasionally to reveal, falsely, but with great distinctness, the sins of others, evil consciences, and corrupt souls, with a view to detraction." The devil is the accuser, hence in exorcisms, he may blurt out the unconfessed sins of those present. So if a supposed visionary proclaims publicly the sins of this or that person which supposedly Jesus or a divine being revealed to him, that person is not led by the divine spirit. We saw an example of this in the life of Sr. Magdalena of the Cross.

Discernment of Mystical Phenomena Part III

"Even Satan masquerades as an angel of light."

—2 Corinthians 11:14

"Many false prophets have gone out into the world."

—1 John 4:1

Guidelines for the Diocesan Bishop and Spiritual Director in assessing the interior life of a visionary

These guidelines may hopefully assist the legitimate superior and authority in ascertaining the authenticity of a person who claims to have been given supernatural revelations. It is presupposed that the alleged visionary is himself seeking to be guided. These guidelines (as well as other resource materials) should not be the only means to discern since the devil is a master deceiver with centuries of experience; reliance must be first and foremost centered on humble prayer to the Holy Spirit to assist the one discerning.

The more influential the supposed mystic, that is, the more followers he has, the more study of other resource materials is needed, the more experts and specialists should be tapped and the greater the necessity to proceed with caution, prudence, and, of course, prayer. If a supposed visionary is well known and performing seeming miracles in a certain diocese, it is recommended that the diocesan bishop of this person form a commission to discern the phenomena. The commission should be made up of theologians especially versed in mystical theology and other related fields, psychiatrists and doctors, researchers and the like.

The bigger the following of the supposed mystic, the more manifestations of seeming miracles, the greater the need for prudence and caution since if the whole thing is demonic in origin, one could surmise that one is dealing with a

fallen angel from one of the higher choirs.

The following principles may hopefully be of assistance in invalidating more quickly false mystics and assist with other aids and resources the final judgment or verdict of the diocesan bishop regarding the authenticity of a mystic or visionary.

1. When guiding a soul who is supposed to be receiving supernatural revelations, check the emotions and the inner movements of the soul of the person as he is receiving the revelations or messages from God. Signs that the divine spirit is at work is when there is a great calm in the emotions and a devout and peaceful recollection in the soul. Afterwards, there is a desire to praise God. Although in the beginning, when the divine first manifests, there may be some kind of surprise or even mild shock. It was, according to Fr. Poulain, SJ, thus that the Blessed Virgin was momentarily troubled by the Angel Gabriel's salutation. St. Teresa of Avila, the great doctor on prayer states that the Divine Master causes "within the powers and senses of the soul a fright… which soon afterwards changes into a blissful peace."

2. A sign that points to a demonic origin is that if these locutions and visions produce no peace, joy, and conviction. Other signs are the presence of anxiety, uneasiness, agitation, sadness, discouragement, darkness, and confusion in the heart of the person which will lead to the devil suggesting some ideas that appeal to one's passions or to some earthly tendencies like the desire for honors or sensible pleasures. It is therefore important to check the interior movements, especially in the depths of one's soul and where they are being drawn to. St. Teresa of Avila speaks about "the great aridity which remains in the soul after these evil locutions."

3. Quoting the great doctor of the spiritual life, St. John of the Cross, he states that the action of God on the soul produces "quiet, illumination, joy like that of glory, sweetness, purity and love, humility and the inclination or elevation of the mind to God… Those of Satan result in dryness of spirit, in a tendency to self-esteem… and in no degree whatever do they produce the gentleness of humility and love of God… They are remembered… with great aridity of spirit and without the fruit of humility and love which issue out of the good visions whenever they are recalled."

4. According to Fr. Poulain, SJ, "Let the director be occupied in working for his penitent's sanctification. Let him always come back to this question: "What profit have you derived from the words that you think you have heard?" So that, according to the author, even when he has not made up his mind regarding the nature of the revelations, he will thus, at least, have made the person focus on using the revelations to grow in holiness of life. If later on, the revelations are discovered not to be divine in origin, the "visionary"

would have brought out good from this evil.

The author gives some advice for the spiritual director: the first is to beware "of allowing oneself to be dominated by another person. Let the director be on his guard against certain prophetesses who, dreaming of some great enterprise and seeing their own powerlessness, form the idea of entering into partnership with their director." Just yesterday evening while I was writing these chapters on discernment, a priest called up seeking advice; a supposed visionary told him that God had told her that God had appointed him to be her spiritual director. I told him to tell her that God has not yet told him that; aside from other advices I gave, I mentioned to this priest that if God were really appointing him, then God would have inspired him to be her spiritual director.

We priests must be very careful since I know of false visionaries who, in order to gain some form of credibility and legitimacy, try to have a priest attached to them as some form of spiritual guide when actually the false mystic is the one in charge. They are continually telling the priest, "God commands you to do this or to do that," "God is asking this of you …" or when the priest has doubts regarding what is going on, "Father, God told me to tell you that you have to have more faith." A priest must be wary when a person comes up to him and says, "God told me to tell you that he is calling you to a special mission with me because time is short…" or "God has commanded me to tell you that you are to build a chapel here in your parish for so-and-so saint or else…" Saints who were true visionaries never acted this way; they were humble towards legitimate authority, always praying for their enlightenment. This was the way of St. Teresa of Avila.

For example, a saint whom God is using to start a particular devotion would always pray to God to inspire those in authority, like the superior and local bishop, so that they would see the merits of such a devotion; they were never aggressive nor were they spouting warnings that if they were not followed, fire will fall from heaven. They also did not manifest an attitude to those in authority that they were the only ones being led by the Holy Spirit.

Fr. Poulain, SJ continues his warning regarding false visionaries when the legitimate superior seeks for proofs that God is truly revealing himself to them, "They often decline to admit the need of any proofs other than their own personal conviction or the tone of piety prevailing in their revelations. At times even, in despair of otherwise vanquishing the director's blindness, as they call it, they bring him some fresh revelation that threatens with the divine anger." This attitude, as was mentioned, cannot be of divine origin.

An example from Fr. Poulain, SJ regarding the infiltration of pseudo-mystics in religious houses is the following account: "I have heard of three persons living in our own time who have seen visions and who, each in her own convent, had succeeded in getting her so-called revelations accepted without attempting to bring any valid proofs. People were simple enough to consult them about

everything; so that they had practically taken over the management of their respective houses. And thence arose disorders and indiscretions. How ignorant one must be of true mysticism to be willing to consent to this form of government by oracles who tolerate no objections to their pronouncements!"

St. Teresa of Avila, speaking of herself, said, "She never undertook anything merely because it came to her in prayer; on the contrary, when her confessors bade her to do the reverse, she did so without being the least troubled thereat, and she always told them everything." We see here the attitude of a true mystic, humble and obedient and not using her revelations with a tone of command to make others, especially one's superiors and spiritual director, obey as though she were speaking in God's name and that even they with their authority were not being guided by God. St. Teresa of Avila was confident that God in his time would reassure the legitimate authority and inspire them with faith regarding the supernatural source of the revelations: "Our Lord will reassure our confessor, whom, when he so chooses, he will inspire with faith that these locutions are from the Holy Spirit."

Secondly, Fr. Poulain, SJ recommends the spiritual director "to pray much and to make the person directed pray, in order to obtain the necessary illumination. God cannot fail to reveal the true way to those who ask it of him humbly. If, on the contrary, we rely only on our natural prudence, we expose ourselves to being punished for our self-sufficiency."

Theologians Speak

The next part of this chapter provides guidelines from different authors known for their expertise regarding mystical phenomena. I have more or less adapted them but retained the essence of what they propose. Reading the succeeding authors, one notices the similarity of many of their principles; this, of course, is understandable since the sources for their principles are the same: the Bible, Church Tradition, and the Magisterium.

John Cardinal Brona (1609-1674) was a Cistercian who was highly regarded as a liturgist and spiritual writer. He is best known for his work on the discernment of spirits and his work, De Discretione Spirituum, seems to be one of the first works to compile an exhaustive treatise on the subject. It is based on the foundation of the Fathers of the Church, solid Church theologians, and the experience of authentic mystics. Some important principles[36] that he mentions are:

1. The divine spirit moves the soul to what is good, holy, and perfect while the evil spirit moves towards vanity and sensuality. What is being strengthened in me: the old man (flesh) or the new man in Christ?
2. God leads a soul with order; progressively from the imperfect to the perfect

with having regard to one's age, state of life, and the measure of spiritual life. The devil follows no such order and he produces untimely fervor that can lead to becoming impulsive with one's plans for one's spiritual life as well as false mystical experiences even when the person is only beginning in his spiritual life which, of course, leads to pride and self-righteousness. In spiritual theology, the mystical life and its accompanying experiences begin when a person is in or has gone through the spiritual experience of the dark nights and has reached the stage of perfection called the unitive stage which is a very high level of sanctity. At this stage, the person does not anymore fall into mortal sins and intentional venial sins and practices the heroic virtues. This person is a living saint and is rare. Persons of this kind would tend to remain hidden and it is only through the living out of their vocation that they become known, such as Mother Teresa and St. John Paul II when they were alive just a number of years back. Be very wary, then, when someone is called a mystic or one who is known to fall into ecstasies (which generally occur only in the unitive stage of perfection).

3. When a soul receives some spiritual gift a little out of the ordinary, a person led by the divine spirit is always afraid that he is being tricked by a delusion. On the other hand, if it is the evil one acting, he inclines the soul to own it at once and be proudly pleased about it.
4. When the divine spirit is at work, there is always an atmosphere of quiet, order, and caution while if an evil spirit is at work, there is produced a spectacle that draws attention to itself through unsettling manifestations; there is also a lack of self-control with regards to the person.
5. When the divine spirit is acting, there is nothing objectionable, nothing contrary to the Christian faith or to good morality when the phenomena occur. The opposite is true of the evil spirit.
6. When the divine spirit is acting, the mystic over time advances to the practice of all the virtues in an exceptional degree. When the evil spirit is acting, the reverse is true; even after many years, the supposed mystic still commits mortal sins and intentional venial sins like anger, pride, impatience, and the like.

John Gerson[37] (1363-1429) was an expert theologian who was chancellor of the University of Paris. He fought against false mysticism in the area of doctrine. His doctrinal sources came from the great personages of Church history which included Pseudo-Dionysius, St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Albert the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Bonaventure. Gerson came out with a list of rules for the discernment of spirits and the evaluation of mystical teachings. According to him, all Christians must accept the doctrines taught by the Councils of the Church, popes, bishops, learned theologians, and those who have the gift of discernment of spirits. He adds that the teaching of any individual mystic must be in accord with Sacred Scriptures and Church Tradition. According to him,

any teaching that incites the passions or undermines the virtues should be rejected. The rules that Gerson laid down not only aided in unmasking false mystics, they enabled him to be one of the first to recognize and proclaim the divine mission of St. Joan of Arc.[38] *We focus now on some of his principles with my own comments:*

1. Check first the mental and physical health of the supposed mystic because persons with uncontrolled emotions or vivid imaginations may easily be misled. I reiterate that a psychiatrist will be of help here to see whether the person may be suffering from a physiological sickness that causes delusions and hallucinations.

2. The kind of life that the visionary leads should also be checked. I would like to comment here that the author would be seeking the quality of the moral and spiritual life of the person in question. It should be noted that, as was mentioned previously, a person who is an authentic mystic should be living a life of radical holiness due to the supernatural contact with God. Gerson even suggests that the spiritual director should act with severity towards the supposed mystic to test the person's humility.

3. The director should discover the motive why the mystic decided to open up and discuss the revelation since authentic mystics are usually loath to discuss these matters even with the director. A true mystic, I must add, is someone who desires to remain hidden just like all the saints unless, of course, souls were at stake. Saints who wrote their autobiographies and their supernatural experiences of God, like St. Therese of the Child Jesus who wrote, *The Story of a Soul*, did so out of obedience even though out of humility she desired to remain hidden.

4. Another point is to check how well the supposed mystic fulfills the duties of his state of life since genuine mystical phenomena should contribute to the individual's growth in holiness within the person's vocation. I would like to give an example: if a married person is not anymore able to fulfill his duties as a husband to his wife and father to his children because of the many obligations imposed by the revelations, then the revelations cannot be of God. If a religious sister is given messages that become a hindrance to the living out of the rule and charism of her congregation, this cannot be of God. God is not a God of contradictions.

5. According to Gerson, the true coin of a divine cause is distinguished from the false coin of illusion or diabolical intervention by the virtues of humility, prudence, patience, and charity. So according to the author, if the revelations cause pride in the alleged visionary or he is seen to be drawn to public attention and praise as well as vanity, then we can conclude that the divine

spirit is absent. It would be good to check how the supposed visionary handles and reacts to suffering, loss of honor, and failure since the cross is always the best test to draw out and discover what lies within a person; is it virtue which is a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence or vice which is a sign of the diabolical spirit?

6. If the person in question is eager to receive revelations, thinks himself worthy of them (presumption), delights boastfully in telling others, displays impatience, counts upon his own judgment as the standard of truth, spurns the counsel and authority of the Church, and shows himself unteachable, one can be certain that we are dealing with a false mystic. False visionaries also delight in persuading themselves that they are doing something magnificent, more than the others, and that they think they know better than anyone else regarding the matters of God, better than the priests and bishops of the Church if these do not easily believe in the "revelations" they have received.

7. According to the author, false visionaries engage in devotional practices which exceed or contradict the rules of life instituted by recognized spiritual authorities within the Church, for example, overtaxing the body and the mind through excessive fasting, vigils, and abstinence.

8. Gerson discusses the revelation itself. It is important to discover the how and what of the revelation's origin; why has it taken place? And where would it lead to? Here, the author is seeking a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon; how did it begin and the circumstances surrounding it, the meaning and reason for it, and a very important question: where would it lead to? Regarding the final point, it may not be so easy to discern the authenticity or not of a phenomenon in the beginning, but looking at the revelation itself and following where it is tending to and what would be its end result can give one a better picture of what is going on. An example would be a supposed visionary whose revelations, although having many messages exhorting to holiness, continually criticize the Church, if one were to study the messages more carefully and perceived that such messages would lead its followers to rebelliousness, disobedience, and even a breaking away from the Church, then these revelations cannot be of divine origin.

9. Finally, the author mentions that true mystics foretell events that are realized. However, it is important that we must still be very discerning with regard to this phenomenon since the devil can make very accurate predictions due to his preternatural powers and intelligence. For example, if a person is sick but still does not feel that he is, a false mystic whom the devil uses can say, "That person is sick of such and such and by the end of the month he would be dead." Since the devil can see the sickness and its progress within the body of the person, he could make this accurate prediction. What he cannot do is to

make known to the false visionary a future event that has no predisposing cause that can be seen by him. This is the reason why we have never heard of any occult fortune-teller hitting the lotto or other games of chance. Only God truly knows the future; in philosophy, we say that he knows the future not as future but as present since all is already known and present to him. Those who consult occult practitioners and give the devil a certain power over them for using his services must be warned. According to St. John of the Cross in his work, *Ascent to Mount Carmel*, "the Devil, after announcing some unwelcome event, can assist in its realization."

Fr. René Laurentin, the greatest living Mariologist and founder of the International Association of Exorcists, cites certain guidelines when discerning Marian apparitions. He has doctoral degrees in Theology and Mariology and was a peritus or expert at the Second Vatican Council. I have added my own commentaries.

1. Check for any peculiarities and eccentricities in the visionary and the atmosphere when the person is experiencing the divine. Anything that brings about discomfort, confusion, anxiety, uneasiness, restlessness, awkwardness, and embarrassment to the observer is not a good sign since when God manifests himself, there is always appropriateness, solemnity, the sense of the holy, gentleness, propriety, modesty, awesomeness, respectability, and decency.

2. See if there are any pathological and psychological illnesses present in the visionary.

3. Seek if there is good fruit in the lives of the visionary as well as the people. I would say that spiritual fruits (growth in the virtues and life of prayer; holiness of life) are what are first and foremost checked more than material fruits like healing, etc. I also add that if there were seemingly miracles that accompany the revelations, always look for supernatural signs and miracles, not merely the preternatural ones which fallen angels can accomplish.[39] Are they truly divine miracles or merely manifestations of the power of evil spirits which are beyond human capacity and hence can deceive man as to their origin?

4. Verify the intensity of the prayer union with God in the life of the visionary and if lacking, then direct the visionary to it; all that is false will be brought to the light within this environment.

5. Answer the following questions with regard to the messages:
   a) Does the apparition adapt the Gospel to the present?
   b) Does it reawaken faith and does it call to conversion?

c) Are the messages simple with evangelical freshness?
d) Does it lead to a personal encounter?

After studying the basic principles of discernment, I would like to recommend that the reader return to the story of Sr. Magdalena of the Cross and try to apply these guidelines to her case.

Case Study

The following is a report that was submitted to a bishop in charge of a diocese regarding a certain community that operated within his jurisdiction. This report was made to assist him in discerning how to proceed with the group. I have changed certain details for the sake of confidentiality and made adaptations to summarize the report. I have included this report in this chapter so that the different principles which we have been discussing for the past few chapters may be made clearer.

A Sto. Niño healing community located in the Visayas region.

Healing is done through a statue of the Sto. Niño. The statue is accompanied by a medium named Mang Juan. The statue at certain times of the day would be possessed by the Sto. Niño and through the medium will twirl around, moving from person to person and will stop in front of certain individuals to bless them and/or give messages to them through the medium. Anyone may ask the statue for specific needs and wants as well as for healing; they may even ask any question they desire. The medium becomes the mouthpiece of the Sto. Niño in responding to the requests and inquiries. The statue is also used to bless the food and water. Although the group was given a spiritual director, he is new and is inexperienced with regard to mystical phenomena.

Critique

First Point
The very foundation of the group is pagan. The Divine never resides in nor enters into man-made objects. This is idolatry. The moving and "dancing" statue is therefore not of God. God or any divine person (whether saint or angel) will never enter into a statue to animate it and then speak through it. This phenomenon is only found in pagan religions like what is found in *anito* worship which our ancestors practiced before the coming of the Spaniards. In the ministry of exorcism, an object with a spirit indwelling in it is called an "infested object" and the infesting spirit is always demonic in origin, never of God, nor an angel or saint.

Second Point
The well-known author Fr. Poulain, SJ, an expert on mystical phenomena, states, "If we examine all the detailed circumstances… the attitudes, gestures, words, etc., do we find the dignity, the gravity, in keeping with the Divine Majesty?" Applying this principle to the paranormal phenomenon of the animated statue found in this community, the Soul and Spirit of the Child Jesus entering into a statue and "dancing" in front of an audience is not in keeping with the Divine Majesty.

Third Point
The phenomenon that occurs in the community has all the hallmarks of a cult, not a Church community. First, the statue is the focus of the entire assembly with Mang Juan as the medium of the spirit in the statue. The medium with his statue is in the forefront and in charge and not the priest (spiritual director) with his ministry. The sacraments are not the center but supplements to merely validate the community's existence as part of the Church.

Fourth Point
The communication of messages done by the statue through the medium to the people is theologically unsound. Studying the Bible and Church Tradition including the lives of the saints, God never communicated to man through the means used by this community. This means of communication has only been seen in paganism (occultism) which is called mediumship. This practice has been condemned in the Old Testament. In Leviticus 19:31, Leviticus 20:6, and Isaiah 8:19-20, we note the evilness of mediumship and contacting spirits and souls of the dead.

Fifth Point
God does not use extraordinary means to communicate, guide, and intervene in man's affairs unless there is a grave reason like, for example, Jesus through St. Faustina (Devotion to the Divine Mercy) or the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima (three secrets of Fatima). The Church structure is the normal means that God uses to teach and guide man; he does not, unless for serious reasons, bypass his own means. Even if the means used in this community has been found to be theologically sound, there is no grave reason which I find why God would use such extraordinary means to communicate himself with this community.

Sixth Point
God does not use extraordinary means for any length of time for communicating messages since all that is necessary for salvation has already been given to us. Even if the means used in this community has been found to be theologically sound, it is dubious that God would continue communicating in an extraordinary manner to the members of this community for all these years.

Seventh Point
What is alarming and very dangerous as well as theologically incorrect is that everyone can come and have a supposed direct communication with God himself even for trivial matters. They can ask the statue any question and the statue will answer through the medium. This is occultism, fortune-telling, and divination. This phenomenon can be found in paganism wherein oracles are used to guide man. The Church and faith become irrelevant since one can ask "God" directly for guidance and even pose questions on morality, dogma as well as more trivial matters like, "Should I apply for a visa to the United States?"

Eighth Point
The statue gives messages to people. Have these messages ever been evaluated and discerned for their compatibility with our faith and morals? Even if the means used in this community has been found to be theologically sound, the messages still have to be discerned properly. Were they ever even discerned? For example, the messages of Jesus to St. Faustina had to undergo very stringent examination.

Some additional points from Fr. Poulain, SJ regarding messages received extraordinarily: "Is the information received useful for our eternal salvation? We can be sure that revelations are not divine when their subject is simply the acquisition of ordinary matters that are of no utility to souls. God does not go out of his way merely to satisfy curiosity."

Ninth Point
The statue is being used for blessing; this is unliturgical and theologically unsound. A statue cannot bless. Only a priest (in this case, the spiritual director) can directly bless the food; only a priest can bless the water and the people present.

Additional Points

First Point
What about the healings being claimed by the group? If there are seemingly miracles of healing, one should always look for the supernatural signs which are beyond the merely preternatural ones because the fallen angels with their preternatural powers can also heal. This we find in the occult. New Agers and pagan occult practitioners like faith healers (*albularyo*) have been known to heal.

Second Point
This is regarding the medium who is supposed to be a conduit between God and man. Assuming that the means used by this person has been found to be theologically sound (which, of course, is not), he must still pass certain criteria

to prove that there is truly a supernatural occurrence and not merely a human or diabolical one. Fr. Poulain, SJ states, "What virtues does this person possess? The important point is to know whether there has been much progress after the revelations." So, not only must an evaluation be made on the ways and means used for communication, the messages given, the healings done, but also the person involved. Has the many years in his supposed "ministry" borne fruits of radical holiness?

Third point
A clear and certain sign that the Church looks for whether the Holy Spirit is truly working or not in a person or a community is the virtue of humility particularly expressed through obedience. If the community is obstinate and disobedient to the bishop in charge of them, that is already a clear sign that the work is not of God. Tests of humility and obedience have to be made to all those concerned with the community. We see how St. Padre Pio and St. Faustina were obedient during the times that they were in question.

Fourth Point
I have heard from a reliable source that the statue can grant a person healing powers. This handing on of powers from a statue is automatically theologically wrong. Secondly, charisms are given directly by God when there is a need and not through an intermediary nor passed down the line through the generations; this is only seen with regard to occult power (such as found in witchcraft) wherein spirits transfer themselves to a secondary host.

Fifth Point
Assuming God is working in this community, the fruits must always be checked, and by fruits, I mean the spiritual fruits that are permanent, not merely the material fruits which the demonic can easily obtain for his followers. With the many years of this supposed community experiencing so-called extraordinary interventions from God, is there an appropriate growth in virtue and prayer? Is holiness truly present in the community and continues to grow?

End of Report

I would like to end this chapter by first stating that the devil has more power today than before, hence it is to be expected that aside from a rise in cases of possession, there will also be an increase of false charisms, pseudo-miracles, and false mystics/visionaries because the devil is a liar and a deceiver who usually chooses to manifest as an angel of light.

The main goal of the devil through false mystics/visionaries and pseudo-miracles is to draw us away from God but another tactic of his, which is the reason he tries to increase all these so called "signs and wonders" is so that he

may distort the proper disposition that a Catholic must have. With all these "signs and wonders," we would have the tendency to be blind to the true signs and wonders of God that usually manifest in our ordinary lives. We would fail to see the extraordinary in the ordinary—the supernatural perspective of St. Francis of Assisi who saw the glory and love of the Creator in the most ordinary objects of nature. If we are not careful, these would be lost to us.

A man of real faith sees God and his providence even in the most ordinary and routinary events of his life. And if we become obsessed with looking for "signs and wonders," we may have the tendency to downplay the basics of our faith: forgiving someone who hurt us, visiting a sick relative, helping out a beggar knocking on our door, studying our catechism, fulfilling the duties of our state in life, growing in a virtue that we lack, like patience, thanking God for another day of life, offering to God our sufferings, and the like.

I would like to give two recommendations to those who believe that they are experiencing certain "mystical" phenomena like locutions and visions. First, seek guidance and direction from the Church through a priest spiritual director appointed by the diocesan bishop. Never, I repeat, never be your own judge! The saints always sought the Church for guidance; God will always work through the hierarchy that he himself established. If one works outside this hierarchy, the grace of discernment will not flow. Secondly, pray each day with sincerity and humility to Mama Mary to lead you to the truth and to unmask whatever is not of God. Offer all that is occurring and lay them at her feet; then simply and trustingly wait like a child and the truth will be revealed in God's time. Mama Mary will **always** lead us to the Truth, which is Christ, her Son. I have personally experienced this. There is no darkness that she cannot dispel.

Testimony

The following is a sharing from one of AMOE's newer lay volunteers who started off as one of our cases. It would be important to take note of the different openings, the kinds of demonic harassments, and how these were dealt with. But most importantly, it is essential to see the centrality of having a proper relationship with God.

The disturbances started when my husband and I moved into our starter home. When we got engaged, my in-laws generously offered for us to build our home on a portion of their lot. Their house was built on a 1,000 square-meter lot and there was a big garden and driveway that we could build on. Some trees had to be cut to accommodate our home and that was when I started to get retaliated on.

Before our marriage, I was relatively healthy. I regularly engaged in sports and, like most young people my age, would attend parties and wake up full of energy, not at all affected by the late nights. I had youth on my side and I looked forward to weekends so I could shop and watch movies during the day and check out restaurants or bars at night. I attended Mass every Sunday with my family because it was expected. I did not feel the urge to develop my relationship with God since I was happily busy with the distractions and fun activities that are available to any young person living in the city.

The first week of moving into our home, my husband had to bring me to the emergency room. My stomach was upset that week and I was suffering from dehydration. After being discharged from the hospital, I started to suffer from frequent viral and bacterial infections. It became a running joke in our office pantry that I was not *hiyang* to being married.

At the start, my viral and bacterial infections had a pattern. I would get sick every February (right before Valentine's Day), Holy Week, and October (near my husband's and my birthday). My infections would last for weeks and would prevent me from joining, or make it difficult for me to join my family's birthday celebrations. I also could not participate well in the Easter Triduum activities of the Church. I remember crying in frustration to my husband because I couldn't understand why despite all the precautions I would undertake to make sure I

would be healthy during those times of the year (I would avoid crowds, eat healthily, load up on vitamins, and sleep early), I would still get sick. This pattern went on for about four years.

After giving birth to our second child, I developed high blood pressure and I had to be brought to the hospital several times because it was at a level that could cause a heart attack. I also developed abnormal bleeding which doctors said was due to hormonal imbalance. I was put on medication but I did not respond as expected. After several doctors, ultrasounds, and medical concoctions later, my bleeding had not stopped and I had lost so much weight that my clothes were falling off me. Aside from the bleeding, I would wake up feeling that someone was strangling me. I also had inexplicable bruises on my thighs and arms. One time, my bruises were so big and numerous that one thigh looked completely black. There was no medical explanation for this and one doctor said it was probably "sympathetic bleeding." After three years of countless visits to doctors in different hospitals, I found a doctor who told me that my condition had no solution and I had to be operated on. He performed an emergency hysterectomy on me to stop me from "bleeding to death."

My recovery was long and painful. Just when I started to feel better, I began to experience a new set of symptoms. I felt cold all the time. I lost all my energy. I was shedding my eyebrows and hair. I was diagnosed with hypothyroidism and adrenal insufficiency and had to be put on several regimens.

One day, I woke up in the middle of the night with piercing pain in my right eye. I couldn't open nor close my eyes fully because of the stinging discomfort. The only comfortable position was when my eye was at half-mast. It was not easy to keep my eye half-closed and half-open the whole day and when I would forget, the pain was intense and excruciating. I found an ophthalmologist who told me I had an abnormal growth in my eye and it had to be scraped off.

Alarmed with my worsening health, my husband and my mother brought me to two healing priests, both popular with their own following. One pushed me down to "slay" me and proclaimed me healed. The other said I was sick but nothing to worry about. I sadly accepted my fate and struggled with my poor health for several years.

Things started to deteriorate quickly when my husband and I had a big argument. He had an office mate whom I felt had an interest in my husband. I had warned him not to encourage the friendship but my husband did not see anything wrong with this office mate. I saw a text message which I misinterpreted as flirty; rage and anger filled me. (My father was unfaithful to my mother when I was young so this was a hot button for me.) In my anger I confronted that person.

Right after this confrontation, my sicknesses came one after the other. I became bedridden most of the time. I had difficulty breathing and had to be operated on twice in my sinuses. I was such a medical puzzle since I wasn't responding to medicines that my ENT surgeon invited his residents to watch my

surgery. They entertained the possibility of my having cystic fibrosis but that was ruled out because "I was still alive." Since I did not respond to both surgeries, my sinuses had to be suctioned by the ENT surgeon every week. I also developed vertigo and had to hang on to banisters whenever I was going up and down the stairs since the world would spin around when I would attempt to leave the house. I was given high doses of medicine to treat my vertigo but improvement was minimal.

During a routine check up, doctors found suspicious formations, cysts, and one mass in my breast which they thought to be cancerous. After biopsy, it turned out to be benign. I was perennially on antibiotics because I was always sick. My medical file folder was so thick that it looked like a phone directory.

The people around me, even my loved ones, were already blaming me for being sickly since they couldn't understand why I kept on getting sick. I was depressed and was placed on antidepressants. Thoughts of suicide would enter my mind.

One day, I saw a black figure in the house. I saw this figure two more times. This was the catalyst that made me think that maybe what I was experiencing was not medical but had a spiritual dimension. I decided to seek outside help.

The first thing I did was to ask help from a priest friend. He volunteered to bless me and my house. I got discouraged because I got sick again right after he prayed over me. My priest friend also got sick—he developed a cough that would not go away for about a month.

In my desperate search for a cure, I then went to a person known for his expertise in the psychic and occult world. He told me a spirit had fallen in love with me. He sent his team to my house. They toured the house and using a combination of their psychic skills and a camera, they confirmed the presence of spirits in the house. In my ignorance, I felt that consulting them was not contrary to my faith since they used a Bible as they prayed in my house.

Involvement in the occult world can be deceiving. I thought that it would be a onetime thing but what started out as a simple pray-over for the house led to tarot card reading, past-life regression, cutting of ancestral ties with a wand, and chakra and reiki healing. I was getting deeply entrenched in this world without any resistance in my heart because these rituals were accompanied by prayers to Jesus and the angels. I felt safe and secure. They advised me to put chimes all over the house, leave an open Bible in the middle of our room, and to remove mirrors which, according to them, were portals.

There was a temporary improvement in my strength, then I got sick again. I decided to go to another person from the Church, who was known to have healing powers. He gave me prayers to be recited daily and told me to post these prayers in strategic places in the house. I recited these prayers with fear in my heart. (At this point I did not have a personal relationship with our Lord so I had little faith.) I got sick again. Another person, also from the Church, instructed me to "talk" to the spirits in our house and befriend them. I was also told to offer

candies on a weekly basis to appease the spirit that was making me sick. a priest told me it was my fault I was getting sick. I was hurt, discouraged, and confused. I felt that the Church (i.e., God) was not welcoming nor loving.

I turned back to the psychic world. I thought that if I could develop my psychic abilities, I would be able to protect myself. I learned how to shield myself, move small objects with my mind, use crystals for protection, and do astral projection. The people I met there referred me to "experts" who told me the name of my "spirit guide" and that this was the one whom I could ask protection from. I met a *mangtatawas* who told me that I had three spirits in my house who wanted me dead. I was also told to buy magnets, to bring these with me all the time, and to install high-powered ones in my house. I learned how to use the pendulum in order to determine which medicine would work best for me.

None of these things cured me. There would usually be a slight improvement at first, then the symptoms would come back (usually worse than before). It was a struggle for me to go to work, much more fulfill my duties as a wife and a mother.

But because the Lord's goodness is infinite, despite my ignorance which caused me to hurt him, he sent an instrument to lead me back within his arms. I had the inspiration to talk to my priest friend again (the one who blessed my house). I shared with him what I had gone through and he said, "I think you should talk to Fr. Syquia." He had just read his book! I was able to get in touch with the Office of Exorcism and I was advised to read the book, *Exorcism: Encounters with the Paranormal and the Occult.* This was the start of my love story with the Lord.

Tears started to stream down my face as I read the book by Fr. Syquia. The book was enlightening yet accepting. In my ignorance, I had committed a lot of mistakes and had hurt the Lord by going to these alternative healers. But unlike my other experiences with the Church where I had felt confused, judged and blamed, reading this book made me feel something new—hope. First, the book acknowledged what was happening to me as a reality. I was not the only one to experience these preternatural events and this meant I was not crazy nor delusional. Second, this book told me that I was getting sick not because I was unlucky. God loved me and did not like what was happening to me. He was waiting for me to call on him for help. I had strayed and I was determined to be one of his children again.

My harassments started the moment I decided to go back to God. The first time I prayed the Prayer for Protection and Prayer of Consecration to Mama Mary, I felt needlelike pains all over my head. These pricks manifested first only during prayer, then worsened till I could feel them throughout the day in different parts of my body. When I started to go to Mass every day (I used to go during Sundays only and more out of a sense of obligation and not because of my desire to worship and be with our Lord), I would cough and my throat would

tighten during consecration. I learned to drink holy water during Mass and put exorcised oil on body parts that hurt during prayer. Religious images and statues in Church would transform into monsters with fangs and blood. I developed partial deafness in my ears and I couldn't hear the Mass very well. My eyes would throb and burn every time I would engage in spiritual reading.

It was harder at night when I would wake up to the feeling that my back was breaking. It was the presence of the Lord that I felt through the love and patience of my husband who would place oil on my back and pray with me in the middle of the night that gave me the strength to continue. I also got strength from my visits to the Adoration Chapel where I learned to just be with Jesus.

Throughout this period my poor health took a turn for the worse. I always felt weak—it was as if something was absorbing all my strength. It was increasingly difficult for me to do simple daily tasks and there were days when I had to use up all my strength just to get up from bed. But the Lord in his wisdom knows when it is time to step in. I remember a particularly difficult day when I had fever and stomach trouble. I was in the bathroom and I started to cry because not only was I weak but the harassments were particularly strong that day. I spoke out loud in tears and said, "Jesus, you know I want to go to Church. Please help me go to Church so I can be with you." My weakness and pain suddenly lessened to a manageable level and since then, I was able to go to daily Mass despite harassments.

Throughout the period (more than a month) before I was granted a schedule for my pray-over, it seemed as if the other side (occult acquaintances) knew of my desire to go back to the Church. I would get calls (which I never answered) and SMS messages asking me how I was doing and enticing me to go visit them again. I felt I was being courted and wooed because the text messages contained a lot of compliments and were so warm and inviting vis-à-vis the Church that seemed to be too busy and was making me wait! I was determined to stick to the one true path despite these difficulties.

As the day of my pray-over approached, unnatural events began to occur more often. Doors in our house would slam even if there was no wind. I would experience blows to my stomach which would make me sprawl on the floor in pain. I would wake up to find the St. Benedict Medal, which I always pinned onto my shirt, flung across the room. One time, while sleeping, I felt a strong tug on my rosary (I would sleep clutching a rosary). The tug was so strong that it broke my rosary into three pieces. The crucifix in our main altar inexplicably broke in three pieces, too, as if the other side was showing me what would happen to me soon. I even got a text message telling me that my pray-over was not pushing through and when I checked with the office, the staff had sent me a text confirming my pray-over!

I had hoped that I would be one of those instant miracles wherein I would be free in just one pray-over, but the Lord willed it otherwise. The first pray-over was significant since it brought back my strength. Gone were the instances

wherein I was bedridden for days. I was still getting sick more often than the average person does but I could function already and fulfill my role as a wife and mother. However, I still had to experience numerous harassments and had to be prayed over several times before I would be completely liberated.

The surprising thing was it did not matter as much to me then that I wasn't completely liberated yet. I had discovered Jesus and had fallen in love with him and his Church already. At this point, what was more important to me was Jesus' presence in my life. "Lord, it is okay if I am not yet well as long as you stay with me on this journey."

I knew that I was not yet completely liberated, though, since I couldn't freely serve and glorify the Lord the way I wanted to. The first time I tried to proofread some prayers for the Church, my nose bled profusely. The blood clots coming out of my nose were bigger than my nostrils. I was coughing and gagging because of their sheer size. Our helper almost fainted as she was mopping our bathroom floor which was covered in blood. I was crying in front of the full sink praying, "Lord, if this is your will, I accept it." The bleeding stopped after some minutes of praying for protection and deliverance.

I experienced electricity like body cramps which made me cry and kneel in pain when I recruited someone close to me to serve in the parish. My arm was pulled and I ended up with a dislocated shoulder when I volunteered to facilitate a Vision-Mission workshop for a church ministry. I also started to see demons around me, mocking and putting their faces inches from mine. One offered me benefits, saying, "Just tell me what to do and I will do it for you."

This brought to light other openings in my life that I had to surrender and pray to the Lord to heal, so I could be protected and liberated. I had to renounce and be cut free of all the occult attachments I had acquired in my search for healing. I also had to be free of a curse placed by someone who had an interest in my husband. The exorcism team also had to pray-over the house where my oppression started. More importantly I realized that I had a lot of lingering unforgiveness with some members of my family and friends.

Throughout this process, the Lord was forming me and teaching me the virtues of humility, patience, and trust. He also wanted me to be more committed to him. The love and patience from the exorcism team filled me with gratitude and made me determined to live a life of service as well.

The members of my family grew spiritually with me. At first, we prayed out of fear of the other side. This realization that evil truly exists made us pray for protection. Without realizing we were being changed by prayer. We started to take an interest in spiritual things, the teachings of the Church, angels, and what was happening in our parish. We found enjoyment in watching Bible stories and the lives of saints. We became acquainted with the priests in our parish which led us to parish service—my husband as a lay minister, myself as lector, and my sons as altar servers. Without realizing it, we have made praying and serving together part of who we are as a family.

When Jesus entered my life, he did not only cure my body which was under oppression. He healed (and continues to heal) my heart and soul. In prayer, he showed me moments of anger and pain in my life that I had to surrender to him. I realized that all this time he was just waiting for me to invite him into my life. I am sure I had asked him several times before to be a part of my life… but these were half-hearted, half-meant efforts as a result of helplessness to solve a problem and my desire for a quick fix from above. The Lord is so smart and good that he knew that before, I was inviting him only on my own terms and did not desire a real relationship with him. This time I asked him on my knees to enter my whole life and to lead me in everything. He heard me and responded in such a personal way that surprised and transformed me.

To be pruned is a painful and humbling process. The Lord started with my biggest sin—my lingering unforgiveness of my father. God made me realize how shameful and proud I was for judging my father. My hurt due to my father's unfaithfulness made me believe that I had a right to be angry. It was only in deep prayer that the Lord made me realize that I had no right to judge my father, for I did not know the circumstances and bondages that may have contributed to his affairs. I made a journey to visit his crypt where I offered flowers and prayed for him. This time it was my turn to ask for forgiveness for judging him. I spent a weekend in tears, tears which cleansed me of my anger, pain, and bitterness. This was apparently the biggest issue that the Lord wanted me to give up to him because, after this, things developed quickly. He showed me all the other people, friends, classmates, and relatives whom I believed (whether true or imaginary) had hurt me and those I had kept a grudge on. The list was long and endless! Our Lord's memory is perfect and he brought to light even childhood instances that I had long forgotten. With his love, Jesus soothed and removed all these pains that I had stubbornly hung on to. I felt very little because I had hurt Jesus infinitely, was forgiven right away, and here I was unforgiving with my neighbors. He allowed me to cry until my tears turned into joy... joy of being healed and of being loved.

As Jesus healed me of my unforgiveness, he slowly healed my body as well. I stopped having virulent viral and bacterial infections. The abnormal tissue in my thyroid and my adrenal sufficiently disappeared without any treatment. My mammogram and ultrasound indicated no cysts and suspicious formations. Hormonal panel testing showed that all my hormones were within the normal range. My persistent vertigo, deafness, and eye pain all disappeared. The inexplicable bruises, strangling, and difficulty in breathing were gone. My blood pressure is now easily managed by medications. More importantly, I could serve our Lord without bleeding, getting beaten and hurt by the other side.

The effects of the medical interventions which I had to go through stayed with me, of course. My sinus surgeries left me with very little sinus tissue that I need to flush my nasal passages regularly. I accept this necessary routine with joy in my heart and offer this activity up to Christ. Because of my hysterectomy, I

can't have children anymore. However, the ministry that the Lord led me to allows me to encounter many other people in need of maternal love and care.

The love of our Lord is cleansing and purifying and overwhelming. When this love healed me (truly Jesus is the ultimate healer!), I felt like a newborn baby free of hurts, grudges, pains, and other emotional baggage which were pulling me down and affecting my relationships. Our Lord removed these emotional deadweights and now my relationships have less judgment, more patience, and acceptance. His love filled me up till I became more generous with my love... because I was loving with a greater love, his love.

When I felt this infinite and accepting love which I was given without any merit on my part, the desire to be worthy of this love grew within me. In deep prayer, I beseeched the Lord to show me the areas in my life which were displeasing to him or parts of me that hurt him. Oh the kindness of our Lord when you ask him with your heart and soul! The Holy Spirit started out gently with me. He made me realize how I had to detach myself from bags and shoes. Like most women of my age, I had been conditioned to consider certain things as status symbols. At the start it was difficult. I would tremble with the strain whenever I would get a text message from a retailer inviting me to view a new collection or be part of a special sale. But see, I had gone back to relying on my own efforts again. When I realized this and asked for our Lord to take over and purify me for him, he did (and continues to do so)! He took away my desire for shoes and clothes. He taught me how I did not honor my body as a gift when I went on faddish diets not for health reasons but in order to look good, or when I wore clothes that were either too tight, revealing, or immodest. I learned to eat so food would nourish my soul. He led me to realize that wearing clean, simple, and modest clothes is a way I can show him and others that I am a child of God. He made me realize how all these had become obstacles to my friendship with him. He also made me see how my drinking and being in the bar business (encouraging other people to drink) made him sad.

He showed me how my inordinate desire to cater to my body through massages (four hour massages and spa days), beautifying methods (diamond peels, lipocavitation, Botox, and extended eyelashes), and my indiscriminate choice with media (television series that had themes of violence and infidelities, books which had graphic descriptions, and songs with suggestive lyrics, etc.) strengthened the "man of the flesh" and weakened the "man of the spirit" that I wanted to be. He not only purified me externally but internally as well... by experiencing his forgiveness and love and patience, he gave me the strength to forgive and be patient with others. He made me see how difficult I was to live with and how even those closest to me had to tiptoe around me. I was proud and sensitive. How his love changed me! After my conversion, my mother, marveling at the changes in me, said, "*Ang hirap mong kausapin dati kasi ang yabang mo*. You knew you were smart." My husband also told me that, before, I was *mabigat kasama* and was usually the topic of his confessions! Now he can't

wait to come home to me every day. Truly these changes could not have happened on my own. It was the Lord's love that was doing it—not me.

I think it is inevitable for someone who experiences Christ's love to fall in love with him and to be forever changed. Bible stories which I had heard numerous times seemed like new and would touch my heart and make me cry. Each word of everyday prayers like the *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* and even the *Sign of the Cross* has become meaningful and has been full of joy. Daily Masses have become special moments with the Lord and my days are incomplete if I could not spend personal time with him in the Adoration Chapel. Spiritual readings and the lives of saints made me *kilig* and inspired. These are older brothers and sisters I could look up to and emulate! I have discovered how my guardian angel was my partner in bringing myself to heaven and how I could pray to other people's guardian angels as well (e.g., my children's) to keep them safe.

I saw how I was mistakenly spending my time on ways of the world instead of focusing on this gift of love, this treasure that, when nourished, gave me joy and peace. Our Lord showed me how I invested so much time planning our trips and vacations (as early as October I would be planning our summer trips already) and did not put in much time and effort in the greatest journey of my life—to prepare myself and my family to be with him. I have found joy in silence because the Lord keeps me company. I could talk to him in my heart and he is always there. I have learned that the Lord is with me throughout the day and speaks to me in the events of my life.

I have learned to appreciate the special personal relationship offered by the Holy Trinity to me: how God the Father is a doting Father involved and concerned with all the details of my life. He welcomed me back like the prodigal daughter that I was and showed me his loving forgiveness. Jesus is my Lord who invited me to become his special sister and friend. The Holy Spirit is my adviser and guides me in my everyday decisions. I have learned to stand still when I need to make a decision till in prayer, I am guided on what course to take (like when it was time to write this story).

My conversion story will not be complete without Mama Mary. I had not nurtured my relationship with her. In fact, I felt that I had no need for another mother because I had a doting mother already. (I had a special devotion to St. Joseph because of my father's infidelity.) I started praying to her, asking her to be my mother and the true mother of my family. I realized that like her son, she was just waiting for me to ask her to be a part of my life. The day I truly felt her love as my Mother was again a period of tears of joy, shame, and regret. It was like discovering a long lost love that I had taken for granted. She made me feel her forgiveness, love, and acceptance of my request for her to be part of our family. Until now I consider her, not myself, as the real mother of our family.

My journey towards the Lord is a daily challenge. I am more aware of the strong concupiscence innate in me. Every minute is a choice and it is quite a

struggle until I remember to ask him to take over—then the battle is won. I cannot give justice when I describe the joy and peace of living this narrow path with Jesus. I start the day with him and end it with him. At the end of each day, despite my best efforts, I know that I have failed him somehow (I could have loved more, been more patient, more giving in my service, etc.), but I trust in his mercy and I know that he accepts me and continues to love me. As a wise man once told me, "Your desire to please the Lord already pleases the Lord." This knowledge gives me the courage to try to serve him better the next day and, as St. Faustina said, "to fight like the child of a King."

Even if what I went through was heavy, difficult, and painful, I consider the day, on which the Lord allowed my oppression, a gift. To all those who contributed to my oppression, I only have love and prayers. To all those who journeyed with me and loved me towards liberation, I also have love and prayers. I love because of a greater, perfect, infinite love that loves me. I love and will continue to love because I am loved.

Amen. Alleluia. May the Lord be glorified in the life I lead and may I sing a song of praise to him the rest of my days. Alleluia.

Personal Lessons from the Field of Battle

"So submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
—James 4:7

"Around us there is the presence of evil. The devil is at work. But in a loud voice I say: God is stronger!"
—Pope Francis

The ministry has not been easy for me. In my own experience, the main battle of an exorcist is not with the devil but with himself. To remain a humble channel of God's grace for the victim requires that the exorcist purifies within himself whatever may become a hindrance to this grace as well as to continually maintain his purity of intention which is grounded in love.

My training to be an exorcist is a specialized form of formation wherein the Lord had to chisel me many times and continues to chisel me to be his instrument; the uniqueness of the ministry brings about a spirituality that is unique. There is a spirituality born of spiritual warfare. I'm sure that the Lord has been very patient with me since when I began, I had many struggles in my own life and there were no official exorcists in the Philippines that I knew of, to mentor me.

I had thought many years back to remain in the ministry of exorcism and liberation for at most two years only and then focus on more "normal" priestly ministry. Sometimes, I have a tinge of regret seeing my fellow priests moving on to different assignments and I am, after many years, still stuck with the demons. I had desired to give my full focus on seminary formation: the training and formation of future leaders of the Church. This ministry in seminary formation had brought me many consolations and I continually tried to learn more and more about becoming a better formator through further studies, readings, and daily life experiences with the seminarians.

But, the Lord seemed to manifest a different path for me and my desire has only been to follow whatever his will was for me. One of the clearest signs for me was my encounter with the growing number of tormented people in need of

guidance and assistance from the Church in the area of the paranormal/preternatural. My conscience could see very clearly that although I knew that I was merely an unworthy instrument with my own weaknesses and sins, the Lord was still calling me to this ministry. Despite my unworthiness, our loving God still trusted me. The old man in me sometimes rebelled in my continuing in the ministry but the Lord in his mercy knew what was best for me and which countless times I discovered to my joy.

For the exorcist, the battle for the bodies and souls of people becomes a unique conversion experienc; he learns in a very radical manner about love, sin, evil, the cross, grace, and many other spiritual realities; with regard to certain virtues and dispositions that he may lack, he is in a sense "forced" to attain them not only for his own soul but for the people who come to him expecting that he stand in the gap between the molesting demons and themselves. An exorcist is expected to be able to prostrate himself in all humility and implore God to have mercy on each of the victims who have come to him for assistance, especially those who have long been in mortal sin and therefore more deeply in bondage to the evil one.

The exorcist is called to be a man of hope

An exorcist, like Moses, is called to stand in the gap between God and the victim. He may at times be confronted with a question difficult to answer, "Why?" He may have an experience of people coming to him and, not being able to understand the reason for their sufferings, they complain to God. And it may happen that he himself will not be able to fully comprehend what is going on. He will see evil and suffering firsthand and a few times may feel confused and helpless himself. He will not always have the answers and understand all the whys; "Why this child?" or "Why is this person's torment not yet ending?"

In my life, I had experiences when I felt tears welling up in my eyes for the victim due to the diabolical suffering I witnessed; I could feel the victim's pain and helplessness. This is where the faith of an exorcist is crucial; he may not always understand what is going on at present but he remembers how the faithfulness of God has always been proven true in the past. He knows that it is not so much where the journey is headed but that God is journeying with him and the victim and therefore all is and will be well. He has faith that God loves the victim infinitely more than his closest family members. He does not need to know all the answers because God has all the answers and is in charge and fully in control; he just has to be God's humble and faithful instrument. As an exorcist, I have been called a few times to allow a confused and struggling victim to cling to my own faith that itself was challenged to see through the darkness of uncertainty; but together with me, we always found the faithfulness of God whose plans are always best and perfectly timed. I have never hoped in vain.

The exorcist is called to be a man of faith

When a case arrives, the exorcist has to be the first to create a faith environment surrounding the possessed and those with him, especially when there is pandemonium, violence, and confusion. He has faith that the Lord will never allow the devil to go beyond certain boundaries. God has set certain parameters which the demons can never cross and I have seen and experienced this reality; and this is one of the reasons that I can remain at peace when confronted with the gravest cases of extraordinary demonic attack.

"I trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, not in myself" (St. Catherine of Siena).

When a demoniac has no capacity to call out to the Lord; the exorcist has to be the one who does so for his sake. In the process of liberation, he has to make up for the still weak faith of the person who is not yet capable of calling upon the Lord with sincerity, trust, and confidence. This challenge to have the necessary faith is sometimes daunting to the exorcist; the sacraments which operate *ex opere operato*, that means they occur even when the priest has the minimum disposition, is not applicable in the ministry. An exorcist must have a living faith; a lack of faith in God and his authority is quickly and tangibly manifested during an exorcism where the demoniac becomes a sort of mirror to the reality to what is in the exorcist's heart.

Faith is necessary on the battlefield. An exorcist without it will not see the demons who are experts in stealth warfare. He has to see with the eyes of Jesus whom the demons could never hide from. With this living faith, he also battles more zealously since he "sees" God and the entire heavenly court watching, leading him on, and assisting him in the battle; he knows that he is never alone and he fights for the glory of God who is lovingly watching him do battle.

Faith is crucial for an exorcist in order to see beyond his unworthiness to the worthiness of the office entrusted to him, and to keep him focused there.

"The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

The exorcist is therefore confident not in himself but in God who has bestowed on him divine power and authority to destroy demonic strongholds. He believes that his authority to exorcise is the active, infinite, and yet very personal power of God's mercy and love for the victim in destroying all demonic obstacles in its wake to reestablish again an intimacy of love between God and the victim.

Only with faith, one that takes all the theology and knowledge about God that a priest has learned and continues to learn and fuses them all into a solid force which he brings into his heart so that it is manifested in the present moment of battle through his words and gestures as he commands authoritatively the demons or humbly supplicates the Lord, can he do justice in giving his all to the

victim. And when the demons are gone, he has to build up the faith life of the person since the person himself must make a heartfelt choice for God; if this is not done, the former victim will become a victim again.

The exorcist teaches the victim to pray to Jesus with an authentic faith and not a magical one; when the victim is conscious, he must fight with the exorcist for his liberation. It is never the exorcist alone in the latter stages of the battle.

The exorcist is an evangelizer

An exorcist is therefore also called to be an evangelizer. He must not merely bring the victim to a deeper knowledge of God but he must facilitate for the victim an encounter with God; this he does because he knows very well that the demons know and fear the power of God's love for the victim which the victim has only to accept in his life. Yes, the demons fear the power of our Father's love for us.

The ministry of liberation does not stand on its own; it is always situated within the context of total pastoral care and evangelization. The ultimate question in the end is not of being healed or not, of being freed or not, but of being with God forever or not.

The exorcist must encourage the victim to move from "Make me whole" or "Deliver me" to "Make me a saint." St. Padre Pio's mission, according to him, was to "wrench souls from Satan." A rule for the exorcist when he meets a victim is therefore to ask himself, "How can I wrench this soul from Satan?" The healing and deliverance of the body is always secondary; the soul being brought back to God is always the main focus of the energies of the exorcist which, of course, brings permanent liberation in all other areas as well. The exorcist journeys with the victim to ensure that the entire painful process is meritorious for the victim and develops his life of virtue.

The exorcist knows his true identity

An exorcist knows his identity which is rooted in the eyes of God. When an exorcist faces the demons in a person, he must already be convinced in his entire being, of who he is in the eyes of God. He must know his God-given identity; if there is any uncertainty, the demons would attack this area and propose another identity. If an exorcist succumbs to this tactic of the enemy, it will be seen easily by those around; there will be fear, anxiety, and confusion in the eyes of the exorcist.

An exorcist must therefore always reflect upon who he is; unworthy though he is, God has chosen him as his instrument. It is the Lord who will battle the demons and not him. The battle is not between creatures: a human versus the devil. No, the battle is between the Creator and a mere creature in the person of

the devil. An exorcist is merely the most humble of instruments that God will use to bring down the proudest creature. If he but remains rooted in the Lord, his rock and foundation, the exorcist will become a spectator of miracles.

The exorcist is a witness to God's special interventions in the life of man

The ministry of liberation and exorcism is a great gift to the minister because he would continually see for himself the power of God's love; he sees in a very tangible and real way that God and his love are real. He cannot doubt this since he sees with his own eyes through the ministry the workings of God's powerful love in the person of the demoniac. Before being sent to Rome for further studies and still assigned to a certain parish, I had to regularly baptize around 250 babies on certain Sundays. With all the crying of babies, noise and movement of the parents, it was difficult for me to see with the eyes of faith what was truly going on: the coming of the Holy Spirit to bring life to the souls of these babies so that they may truly become children of God and heirs to the heavenly Kingdom. I know that there were times that I was just going through the motions; this can happen with priestly duties done again and again by a priest and unless a priest continually reflects and prays about what he is about to do, he will lose the eyes of faith that sees the extraordinary in the routinary. But in the ministry of exorcism, one perceives with full clarity the reality of his Catholic faith in the person of the demoniac, from his possession to his final liberation.

The exorcist is called to be a humble man

The Lord does not choose the qualified but he qualifies those he chooses, but only if the instrument is humble. An exorcist must continually struggle to remain humble since the ministry among other ministries contains many temptations to pride and arrogance. From the media and the faithful who seek his help to those who have been liberated can come the temptation that he is someone special and a cut above the rest; to this the exorcist must proclaim, "Jesus must increase and I decrease!" It is always Jesus and never the exorcist who expels the evil one. Humility must always be alive in his soul; this is the source of his effectiveness as God's tool as well as his protection. As God said to St. Catherine of Siena, "Know that the pride of the devil cannot resist the humble mind."

An exorcist must always make sure that his ego is kept in check. The power of God's love reaches the victim most powerfully when an exorcist is humble. When a demoniac is not liberated immediately and the exorcist has done all that he should do, then he must be at peace. If he is so focused on success and not

faithfulness, the ego has already come into the picture and this is very dangerous for an exorcist. If he becomes annoyed and dismayed because the demons were not immediately cast out during the session although he had done all that was necessary, the exorcist's ego that is pride is coming into the picture. It is Jesus who heals and delivers and always according to his time frame.

An exorcist, instead of focusing on his ego, must focus on the suffering Jesus in the person of the demoniac; the ministry is not about battling demons but caring and serving the others who are in bondage to the demons. When fear and doubt enter the heart of an exorcist, this is a sign that the ego is again taking central stage. Love casts out all fear; fear is caused by the person focusing primarily on himself and not the object loved.

Fear can also enter the heart of an exorcist when he is attached to something, even one thing, more than God and his will. For any Catholic, this attachment can come from any of the following: those good in itself and the bad like vanity, health, ambition, possessions, age, power, work, position, and the like. When some or even any one of these is prioritized and valued more than God and his will, fear easily enters into one's heart.

The exorcist always checks the purity of his intentions

The exorcist must always make sure his intentions are pure. It will not be the ministry of exorcism per se that will make an exorcist at the end of his life pass the judgment of God but the motivation behind it. He battles out of love to bring forth the image and likeness of God in the victim whom the demons seek to desecrate; he fights for God's glory and the salvation of souls, nothing more, nothing less.

The exorcist is called to be a man of courage

An exorcist is not afraid because he knows that the devil himself has no real courage within him. Authentic courage or fortitude is a supernatural virtue which means that it is founded on grace. Since the devil and his demons have no grace in them, it implies that they have no real courage. What is found in the devil and his minions are only vices or habitual sinfulness such as pride, envy, and anger. When an exorcist confronts the demons in a demoniac, what he first sees as courageous ferocity is actually merely arrogance rooted in pride and anger. These are easily overcome since these vices of pride and anger cannot withstand the virtues of true courage and humility placed by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the exorcist.

When demons through the eyes of the demoniac stare menacingly at me, all I do is to stare back at them and command with confidence using the Name of our Lord and they very quickly turn away and back down. Later on, they will be

screaming and pleading for mercy. I tell new exorcists or exorcists-in-training not to fear and be fooled by the evil menacing stare of the demons; they have no real power and force behind them and their endurance is non-existent which means that when confronted with true courage, they back down in fear. To the parish priests: when a demoniac is brought before you and the demons are trying to stare you down with a menacing stare, simply put a crucifix in front of their eyes and see the effect.

In the ministry of liberation, it is to be expected, as almost all new exorcists will tell you, that the exorcist will not only see the devil harassing the victim but he himself will experience the harassment. This is both a challenge and a gift from the Lord. A challenge because he has to be always watchful to develop and guard his spiritual life, but also a gift because this spiritual life is God himself.

In the ministry, when I get harassed, or my team gets harassed, I always say that this is a good sign. a good sign because if the devil hates what one is doing and therefore harasses the person because of it, then it simply means that the person is doing something pleasing to the Lord. I always mention St. Jean Marie Vianney, the patron of pastors, to the team and how he would be delighted when the devil would oppress him since he knew that a great sinner was coming the next day to confess to him. The AMOE team and I, after many years of experience, already know when a difficulty is simply a normal human condition which everyone experiences or a demonic harassment and retaliation. But with my own experience, all cases affect the exorcist one way or another and this can slowly eat away at the exorcist if he is not rooted in God through a priestly lifestyle.

Every individual case has its own type and set of harassments which can happen even before the initial interview. For me, these harassments, as I mentioned, are a good sign because this means that the demons are threatened and this also validates that the case has a truly demonic origin. There would be times when I had to watch my emotions carefully during particular cases since I would be overly sensitive and easily provoked to anger for no apparent reason; this is called oppression of the emotions. I would have bouts of painful and very draining scrupulosity which I am sure the demons aggravate to drain and distract me, especially during important and stress-filled moments. I would also have bouts of unusual tiredness and fatigue. Another pattern that I became aware of was that sometimes I would have nightmares before or after a case, whether it was a case of extraordinary attack on a person or a place, and the type of nightmare would manifest what type of head demon was in charge. I have learned to distinguish an ordinary nightmare from a demonic attack after years of experience.

Now, an exorcist has to distinguish whether the attack is mainly due to a serious spiritual and moral opening in his life, which means the harassments may dysfunction the exorcist temporarily, or it is part of God's plan to keep the exorcist humble, warn him that he is about to commit a mistake somewhere, or

already moving towards the wrong direction (here the harassments would tend to progress) as well as allow the exorcist to offer some sacrifice for the victim. The suffering an exorcist experiences due to demonic retaliation or harassment is never wasted; it is offered up for the victim's liberation. Prayer and penance always go together for the exorcist. An important point to remember is that if the harassments make the exorcist dysfunctional, then he must make a careful examination of conscience with regard to his moral and spiritual life.

When I was new in the ministry, the harassments were numerous that sometimes I became dysfunctional as an exorcist. Today, I am so thankful to God and even greatly amazed at his mercy for me and the team of both exorcists and volunteers since with so many very serious cases of people who have literally given themselves to the devil and used his power to even kill others, the Lord has continually, through the mantle of Mama Mary, protected us from harm. Knowing the gravity of our cases, the mere fact that I am still functioning with the team is truly, for me, in all sincerity a miraculous intervention of God's goodness and love. I am also sincerely grateful for all the religious, active and contemplative, who pray for our ministry night and day. They are the hidden powerhouses of the ministry.

The exorcist is called to be a discerner

An exorcist always discerns so that it is always the Holy Spirit who is in charge. He must also pray to God so that he may discern correctly if the case before him has a demonic component and therefore he can respond appropriately. God desires more than the exorcist does to bring out the truth regarding each person seeking assistance and this is what gives the exorcist faith and confidence. Whenever I am interviewing a case, I automatically call the Holy Spirit to infuse me with the grace of discernment, to fill me with himself. He has never let me down in diagnosing and discerning the person before me.

Now, even if there is the probability that it is purely psychological or physiological, as a priest, the exorcist is called to respond to the case as Jesus would: with charity and compassion. It is recommended for the exorcist to share a few words of consolation and encouragement and it could also be appropriate to pray for healing if the person desires it.

An exorcist must always discern carefully what is going on with the victim. He must never make hasty judgments regarding the case just relying on gut feelings. He is to discern, praying continually to the Holy Spirit to guide him. When he is counseling the victim, he must be able to help the victim see what God is allowing and doing in his life so that the victim may properly respond to what would manifest as God's will. Sometimes the exorcist, after a number of exorcism sessions and the demons have not all gone, has to be able to assist the victim to find out that one key remaining that will finally destroy the demon's stronghold in the person's life. It could be a deep anger that the victim does not

wish to let go and which he is hiding from the exorcist or it could be an unforgiveness that the victim has either suppressed or repressed. The Lord would manifest this block if the victim is truly sincere in trying to cooperate with God's grace of purifying him of all that is not of God.

The exorcist must see the world always with the eyes of faith

In the ministry of liberation, God's desire to bless is infinitely greater than the devil's desire to curse but normally we tend to take these blessings of God for granted or we are not aware that God is acting in our lives at every moment. We can be so focused on looking for God in the extraordinary events only and forget that he acts in the many ordinary everyday events in our lives. Unless we open our eyes to God's actions in our daily lives, we would waste all the opportunities of getting to know our loving Father. It is like a child receiving many gifts but does not know that they come from his father; he will grow up without any kind of gratitude or any loving sentiments for his father. The saints always saw the loving hand of God in even the simplest events in their lives. Just the mere fact that we are still breathing is a sign that God's loving providence is present in our lives. Seeing all with the eyes of faith will grant confidence to the exorcist that he is never alone when he confronts the demons in a demoniac; God's providence surrounds, protects, guides, and sustains him. May we be able to have this vision of faith each moment and day of our lives.

Without God's providence, the demons would have killed the entire human race already; they can easily do so since they are more powerful than man and are the most hateful, violent, and aggressive of creatures. Many people continue to fear the devil because they see more and are more focused on his tangible manifestations around them through their personal experiences and the media; they tend to lack the eyes of faith to perceive divine providence all around them and see the countless times God has intervened in their lives with his grace.

The exorcist is a co-sojourner with the victim

An exorcist is called to journey with the victims sent to him: encouraging, consoling, challenging, comforting, and evangelizing. He also never forgets to offer Masses and personal prayers for the victims under his care. Merely expelling demons is not enough since they are innumerable and will always be there until Jesus comes again; the main task of the exorcist is to journey with each individual victim so that each of them would grow in holiness through these demonic attacks. Journeying is therefore important where one will see how God through the exorcist is able to bring out good from the bad.

A difference between occult power and divine power is that divine power is a power whose essence is love, hence it brings a relationship always into the

picture. a relationship with God through the exorcist is not established by just merely praying over the victim; it is the journeying that is of paramount importance. In our office (AMOE), due to the number of cases and the lack of exorcists, it is most of the time the lay volunteers assigned as case officers who journey primarily with the victim. An exorcist who journeys with the victim through the entire process of liberation must be a source of encouragement to the victim since many times, before the victim becomes better, he will feel the attacks getting worse. This occurs with persons whom the devil has continually harassed in a hidden manner slowly eating away at the person's spiritual, moral, emotional, and relational life. As the exorcist through the power of God draws out the devil to the open, the devil who, is now clearly threatened, has no more need to hide and seeing that his time has been cut short will now fight openly, aggressively, and with all his might. We may liken the above scenario in a person who has been chronically sick for a long period of time with a disease and has to undergo some form of surgical treatment to get better; the person will suffer more before he starts to actually feel and get better.

The Desert Fathers were ascetics who went to the Egyptian desert to fight the devil face-to-face: battling the demons not merely through temptations but in a combat that was very physical and tangible. Egypt was a favorite place for these early saints to go to since they knew that many demons resided there; these demons were the many deities that the Egyptians worshiped. These demons had tremendous power as can be seen when Moses was challenged by the magicians and sorcerers of Pharaoh. The demons attacked the hermits and monks openly and not simply in a hidden manner since these unclean spirits could not anymore simply tempt them through the flesh which they had mortified to submission and the world which they had fully renounced and left. When the devil cannot hide anymore, he tends to attack man in a more visible, tangible, and aggressive manner.

A point that must be remembered in the process of liberation is that if the demons have not yet all gone but the person is growing in his relationship with God, one is on the right path. In the ministry, the standard of, we may say, "success" is not centered on the external circumstances of the victim but what is happening in the interior life of the person.

An exorcist must have the courage to speak especially about the darker areas of life

"An obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it."
—1 Corinthians 9:16

"My children, remember that hell is full of closed mouths."
—St. Josemaría Escrivá

"Let us be neither dogs that do not bark nor silent onlookers nor paid servants who run away from the wolf. Instead, let us be careful shepherds watching over Christ's flock. Let us preach the whole of God's plan to the powerful and to the humble, to rich and to poor, to men of every rank and age, as far as God gives us the strength, in season and out of season."

—St. Boniface

Speaking about the devil to bring him to the light when he is attacking in a hidden manner is the duty of an exorcist. War always means that there is an active aggressor, hence persons must be warned of this danger. It is just in the same way as it would be wrong for a specialist doctor to remain silent when he sees a certain sickness like cancer eat away at his patients without them knowing anything about it. When the patients experience the pain, then it would be almost too late for an intervention. A good specialist doctor does regular tests on his patients to check for indicators that would warn him of the probable progress of the sickness. As much as possible, he would do his best to detect it early, give advice to his patients on how to remain healthy as well as what to watch out for as indicators of the sickness. From our example, the doctor is focused not on the cancer itself only but also on the health of his patients. In speaking about the devil, the exorcist is not focused on the devil but on the flock he has been given to bring safely to heaven. He is called to be a watchful shepherd knowing that the wolf is real and tends to hide among the sheep using sheep's clothing. The sheep may not believe in the wolf or if they do, they don't believe that he is anywhere nearby; but this does not keep the shepherd from warning them as early as possible of its presence somewhere nearby. He is constantly looking out for their safety which is the reason why he has been called. When a wolf has his fangs already on the neck of a sheep, the battle of the shepherd for the life of that sheep would be truly terrible to watch.

Many good people fall into the deceptions of the devil because they have no standard or point of reference to critique their experiences. Mysticism without sound theology is dangerous and can lead to heresy and demonic influence. From my personal experience, some Catholics, who do not find answers in their faith regarding their experiences in the spirit world, will usually seek them in the occult. The exorcist should therefore teach the stand of the Church even though it may not be taken too kindly by the hearer (especially those who are in one way or the other connected with the occult); he must, like Jesus, preach the truth for the sake of souls and never be afraid of the consequences. He has promised to be God's mouthpiece; he is not the mouthpiece of the world for what the world believes as "real," "true," or "good." He is confident that like during the time of Christ, the many souls that have "rich soil" will listen and bring forth a rich harvest in their lives and in the lives of others.

To conclude, both the beginners and the Veteran exorcists will tell anyone that the ministry is a great gift and blessing from the Lord. As with any great

blessing, there is always the personal responsibility of the recipient to make it bear the proper fruit not only for himself but for the others as well.

The challenge for me which I must especially watch out for is this: that after many years in the ministry, complacency and, worse, presumption become a real temptation since everything becomes more and more routinary.

Another challenge for me has to do with the harassments that come to me with each individual case; these attacks have a tendency or, I may say, a temptation for me to draw away from the victim's sufferings to my own sufferings. I struggle almost continually to refocus on the sufferings of the victim and not on my own.

To our dear readers, after you finish this volume we humbly ask you, say a prayer for us exorcists and our teams so that we may have the grace to continually and faithfully fight the good fight to the end and for only one reason: the greater glory of God. May all glory be always and only his.

"We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way. Many who may seem to us to be children of the Devil will still become Christ's disciples" (St. Francis of Assisi).

"To free a man who is a bodily captive in the hands of the barbarians is a noble deed. But to free a soul from the slavery of Satan is greater than to deliver all who are in bodily slavery" (St. John Eudes).

Appendix

The Occult Has Demonic Influence[40]
A Pastoral Letter by
Most Rev. Donald W. Montrose,
Bishop of Stockton, CA
Provided courtesy of:
Eternal Word Television Network

In the United States today, the occult has become much more popular than it was twenty years ago. Today, there is popular Satanic music, Satanic street gangs, an increase in Satanic worship, a more widespread use of the horoscope and study of the signs of the zodiac, and Satanic games that can be purchased.

In spite of this, many people do not take the occult seriously. They laugh off the notion of the *power of evil* as actually being a part of the "real" world in which we live. I do believe that demonic influence is very real and that it constitutes a dangerous threat to our spiritual well-being. What is written here is, at best, a brief summary of a reality that I have no desire to spend much time exploring. My purpose is simply to give you enough knowledge to be able to at least suspect the presence of the occult so that you can avoid it completely.

We are *baptized* and *confirmed* Christians. In both of these sacraments, we have renounced Satan, all his works, and the empty promises of the kingdom of darkness. In these baptismal promises, we profess our faith in Jesus Christ and in the Church. Now, the Kingdom of God is absolutely opposed to Satan's kingdom. Salvation in Jesus Christ presupposes our rejection of the kingdom of darkness. Our life, though, is a spiritual warfare. In the first Letter of St. John (1 Jn 5:18-20), he tells us two things. First of all, we who are born of God (by Baptism and the Holy Spirit) are protected by God so that the evil one cannot touch us. But he also tells us that the whole world is under the evil one.

The evil one can tempt us, but he cannot touch us directly unless we open the door for him. We should not fear Satan nor should we be constantly looking for him in the ordinary happenings of our life.

Do not concentrate on the evil spirits, but fix your eyes and your faith upon

our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are saved by Jesus Christ alone, through prayer, our adherence to the Word of God in the Bible, and through the sacraments, especially through the presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

In our prayer, we should not forget to involve Mary, the Mother of God, who has crushed the head of the ancient serpent (cf. Gn 3:15). Devotion to Mary is a powerful means of protection in our daily life.

What is the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of darkness, like? It is a lie that seeks to resemble the Kingdom of God. Read Isaiah (14:12-15). It is about Satan. The prophet tells us that, in his heart, Satan is determined to be like God.

Therefore, in Satan's kingdom, he wants everything that is in the Kingdom of God. But his kingdom is a lie; it is false. In the kingdom of darkness, there is false worship and adoration; there is evil prayer. He offers us false happiness and peace. He holds out to us dark wisdom and knowledge. This is how he tempted Adam and Eve (cf. Gn 3:5). Satan said, "No, God knows well that the moment you eat it (the forbidden fruit) your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad. "In his kingdom, Satan also offers us a health that is unto death, and a protection that is false. Just as we picture the angels of heaven singing and worshipping God, there is also a special music that is evil in the kingdom of darkness.

Satan's kingdom is a lie. He wants to be like God. But in the very first of the Ten Commandments, God told Moses, "I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods that are proposed to us in the kingdom of darkness." St. Paul tells us to be on our guard, "The Spirit says clearly that some men will abandon their faith in later times. They will obey lying spirits and follow the teaching of demons" (1 Tm 4:1). Let us hold fast to our faith in the Lord Jesus and his Church.

When the Israelites were about to come into the promised land, the Lord God gave them many commandments that had to do with the true worship that he desired, and the false worship that he hated. These same commandments hold for us today.

"When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to imitate the abominations of the people there. Let there not be found among you anyone who immolates his son or daughter in the fire, nor a fortune teller, soothsayer, charmer, diviner, or caster of spells, nor one who consults ghosts and spirits or seeks oracles from the dead. Anyone who does such things is an abomination to the Lord, and because of such abominations to the Lord, your God is driving these nations out of your way. You, however, must be altogether sincere toward the Lord, your God" (Deuteronomy 18:9-13).

The Lord says that we must be sincere with him. We cannot have it both ways. Jesus said, "He who is not with me is against me" (Mt 12:30). We have to be firm in our resolution to follow the Lord alone.

Let us now consider some examples of forbidden knowledge and power.

When we talk about forbidden knowledge, we simply mean knowledge that is obtained outside of God's influence or the normal way that human beings obtain knowledge. None of us knows the future; from our knowledge of particular circumstances we can know what might possibly happen. This is one thing. But to seek knowledge of the future or intimate knowledge about another person, apart from God, and through the help of clairvoyance or spirits is what is meant by forbidden knowledge.

Forbidden power is a kind of magical power that produces effects apart from God and in a way that is beyond ordinary human means.

The Kingdom of Darkness and Forbidden Knowledge

"Do not go to mediums or consult fortune tellers, for you will be defiled by them. I, the Lord, am your God" (Leviticus 19:31).

"Should anyone turn to mediums and fortune tellers and follow their wanton ways, I will turn against such a one and cut him off from his people" (Leviticus 20:6).

Astrology, Horoscopes are Pagan Customs

Fortune-tellers try to predict the future through the use of the occult, magic, or superstition. It is forbidden to seek knowledge of the future by using playing cards, tarot cards, the crystal ball, the study of the hand, the stars, examining the liver of dead animals, shooting arrows, the Ouija board, or any other superstitious means.

A medium is a person who has immediate or secret knowledge either by some questionable power of his own or through the power of an evil spirit that works through him. In l Samuel chapter three, read how King Saul consulted a medium and died the next day. 1 Chronicles 10:13 says that Saul died because of this.

Astrology and Horoscopes

Jeremiah 10:2—"Thus says the Lord: Learn not the customs of the pagans and have no fear of the signs of the heavens, though the pagans fear them." By studying the stars and planets, an astrologer casts a horoscope on the basis of the month and the day of an individual's birth. The horoscope is a prediction of events likely to occur in a person's life based upon the movement of the stars and planets. Even though millions of people follow horoscopes with greater or lesser interest, this is still a type of fortune-telling. Even if you say you do not believe in horoscopes, and only read your own for fun, you should abandon this

practice. The daily horoscope can easily influence us from time to time. It is a way in which we open ourselves to the occult.

If you want to live in the Kingdom of God, renounce horoscopes and all other means of fortune-telling. Any playing cards, Ouija boards, or other things used for fortune-telling should be destroyed.

The Kingdom of Darkness and Forbidden Power

Witchcraft or superstitious magic is used to produce effects that are beyond the power of man. These effects may be good or bad and are brought about by the use of magical words or gestures, or the use of magical herbs, powders, liquids, or similar things. There is often a specific invocation of the devil. Physical evils are directed against individuals because of hatred or jealousy. We have all heard about sticking pins in dolls, the evil eye, the eating of cursed food or drinking a liquid, that through the power of darkness is to cause harm, sickness, or death. This is witchcraft. Today, witches can be found almost everywhere, and often they are presented in a positive light. Just remember everyone involved in false worship, seeking forbidden knowledge, or using forbidden power should be absolutely avoided.

There is also an increased interest in African witchcraft—voodooism. The gods of voodooism are good and bad. Usually a voodoo service begins after sunset and ends in the early morning. It often includes a bloody sacrifice of a goat or chicken. There is prayer and singing. The gods are supposed to briefly enter into the persons during the ritual.

In voodooism and witchcraft, Catholic objects such as images of saints, crucifixes, candles, holy water, and Catholic prayers are sometimes used, as well as other objects and prayers. Do not be fooled by the apparent religious nature of what happens.

If you have any objects or written prayers that have been used in witchcraft or given you by a witch, they should be completely destroyed.

If you have been involved in witchcraft, you must renounce the devil, renounce the witchcraft in which you have been involved and all witchcraft, ask God's pardon, and confess your sin to a priest. In Confession (the sacrament of Reconciliation) there is divine power needed to free one from the influence of evil.

Charms and Amulets

This is a form of magic in which the particular object is believed to have power to attract the good or to ward off evil. These are particularly bad when given to us by a fortune-teller, spiritualist, "curandero" or some person involved with the occult. When the object is worn on the person or carried in the purse or placed in

the home, it means that the influence of evil is always present there with us.

Examples are: carrying garlic in the purse in order to always have money, keeping an open pair of scissors for good luck, keeping special herbs in a jar, wearing a crescent around the neck or a necklace of garlic, putting alfalfa and flowers in front of a statue, placing figures of oriental or Indian gods in the house, and so on. Much of the modern jewelry worn about the neck is now actually representative of something used in witchcraft. Usually people wear this jewelry innocently.

We must be careful not to use religious medals or statues in a superstitious way. No medal, no statue, nor religious article has any power or luck connected with it. A medal, statue, or candle is only a sign of our prayer, asking the saint to intercede with God for us. All worship is given to God and to him alone.

All of the objects described above or any other objects used in a superstitious way should be effectively thrown away or destroyed. If we are wearing jewelry that corresponds to a zodiac sign, or if we wear something that is representative of witchcraft, we can open ourselves unwittingly to the kingdom of darkness. People wear religious medals because they seek the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary or the saints, and they desire the protection and the blessing of God. Wearing something that represents the occult, even in an innocent way, is symbolic of our being under the power of darkness. We should not hesitate to get rid of this type of jewelry. Either we want to be in the Kingdom of God or we don't.

Renounce Satan, renounce the use of charms, and ask God's pardon. If you deliberately carved such an object to ward off evil or to attract good luck, it would be well to mention this when you go to Confession.

Place your faith, not in the kingdom of darkness, but only in Jesus Christ who cures, who saves, who protects, and who loves us.

Spiritualists or Spiritualistic Churches

Spiritualism involves a communication with the dead or with the spirit world by some psychic or occult means.

Great care is to be used because many people are fooled. There can be the use of the Bible, holy water, statues of saints, and Catholic hymns. Spiritualists often believe in the Fatherhood of God, doing good to others, personal responsibility for what one does, and reward for good deeds and punishment for evil deeds. Many are Christian or even Catholic and profess faith in Jesus.

But there is always a dangerous attempt to communicate with the dead or with spirits in some way. It can be through a séance, or perhaps the person just seems to go into a trance.

Sometimes spiritualists are involved in healing, witchcraft, fortune-telling, or even blessing homes to protect them. Sometimes they believe in reincarnation as well.

Reincarnation (Theosophy)

This is the belief that the soul, after death, passes into the body of another human being, an animal, a plant, or even an object. Many oriental religions or cults believe this. In Hinduism, the god Vishnu is believed to have several reincarnations as a fish, a dwarf, as the person of Rama, and as Krishna in the different ages of the world. This is contrary to the Bible and to all Christian belief in the afterlife. "It is appointed that men die once, and after death be judged" (Heb 9:27).

Those involved with spiritualists must renounce Satan, renounce spiritualism, ask God's pardon, and confess their sin to a priest.

Curing Sickness through Superstition ("Curanderos" and *"Santeros"*)

It doesn't matter if there are statues, holy water, crucifixes, prayers to Jesus, Mary, and the saints, if there is any superstitious practice, it is evil. These are some examples:

— using charms or a tomato to wash one's body, putting the remainder under the bed,
— cleaning one's body with eggs or lemons and burning the materials with charcoal,
— using rose water and alcohol for healing. (In one case, this was prepared by placing a skeleton in the water for six hours, followed by singing and praying over the water.)

Sometimes a "curandero" gives a special vitamin to take or even prescribes "Catholic" prayers to be said. None of these "prayers" should be said in these circumstances because they were prepared under the influence of evil.

Other examples include:

— taking a special bath prepared with wine, flowers, bread, cinnamon, black sugar, and water from a river,
— wrapping a person in a special bandage, cutting off piece by piece, and burying it in a recent grave in the cemetery.

These are just a few of the superstitions used, but there are many more.

Sometimes people pray to God and to the saints and then go off seeking relief through the kingdom of darkness. Many times God does not heal through prayer or doctors because he wants the soul to be healed first of hatred, jealousy, or

some other sin. God knows what he is doing. We have to choose either the power of God or the power of evil. If you have any objects used in these false cures, destroy them. Renounce Satan, renounce this sin, ask God's forgiveness, and confess your sin to a priest.

Hypnotism

Although hypnotism is now used sometimes by respectable doctors, dentists, and therapists, it was linked in the past with the occult and with superstition.

Even when it is legitimate, there are certain real dangers that must be very carefully considered. In hypnotism, one surrenders for a time his own capacity to reason; there is a dependence of the one hypnotized on the will of the hypnotist; also there can be unfortunate aftereffects that result from this technique.

Except for a very serious reason, avoid submitting to a hypnotist; never do it for the purpose of entertainment.

Music

In our day, hard rock music played by "satanic" musical groups presents additional problems. This music often glorifies Satan and also, at times, awakens desires to commit suicide, to use drugs, and to misuse sex. The music is also known to encourage physical violence. Even hell is proposed as a desired end of life. The evil is found in the musical combination of words, rhythm, and noise. Records or tapes of this kind should not be kept in the home but should be destroyed, even if they have cost a considerable amount of money. Choose the Kingdom of God!

Devil Worship

It goes without saying that praying to the devil, worshipping Satan, reading the Satanic bible, or taking part in a Black Mass which mocks the crucifixion of Jesus and the Eucharist are among the most serious sins that one can commit.

In some Satanic worship, there is at times sacrifice to Satan by a horrible killing of animals, and even the murder of human infants. The secrecy surrounding this activity enables the "Church of Satan" to obtain a certain respectability in our society. It has the same legal standing as any other church.

Do not be deceived; being involved in this false church is a very serious matter. Catholics who wish to repent must resign from the false religion at whatever cost, renounce Satan and their sin in all their heart, and confess this sin in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

The New Age Movement

Although virtually unknown a few years ago, this movement is gaining in popularity on an international level. On the surface, it appears to be a "peace" movement, but it definitely belongs to the occult. This is because it presents some basic characteristics that are identified with the occult, even though Satan is not mentioned.

For example, the "god" of the New Age is not the God of Christianity and Judaism. The New Age god is more like an impersonal energy or force of which the whole universe consists. This is a form of pantheism. For us, God is Creator and Lord of all. We are his creatures. In the New Age, Jesus becomes one of the many spiritual masters who discovered his higher self. It is believed that in the New Age we can also be enlightened, and this through our own efforts, not through revelation and the grace of God.

The New Age Movement is sometimes called a peace movement. Somehow, it is said, that when we become a part of this "Harmonic Convergence" we can bring to bear a mighty power that is beyond ourselves for achieving world peace. But when we talk about any power that is not from God, and beyond ourselves, we are really talking about the occult.

Do not be deceived by their talk about ecology, the beauty of nature in the world, and the fundamental goodness of the apparent goals of this movement. Those who join the New Age Movement are entering a movement dealing with occult spiritual power. It is not a spiritual power that comes from God, but from the kingdom of false light and darkness.

The Kingdom of Darkness

This kingdom offers a false peace and happiness in sin. Man is capable, especially in heaven, but even here on earth, of experiencing a deep joy and a deep peace given by God. Many of us have experienced this. There is false joy offered, for example, in the sin of drunkenness or drug abuse. This false joy is also offered in the sins of sex before marriage, adultery after marriage, or homosexuality.

When people are deeply involved in these sins, or in murder, violent anger or in deep hatred, jealousy and unforgiveness, they are really living in the kingdom of darkness and can open themselves up to the possibility of direct attacks from the evil spirits.

The danger today is that sin has become very "respectable" in our society. Sex before marriage, adultery, heavy social drinking, abortion, and homosexuality have all attained a certain "respectability." They do not seem so bad. That is because they are not bad in the kingdom of darkness.

Eliminating the Kingdom of Darkness

Our homes should be sacred, peaceful places in which to live. Our homes need to be clean. We should not let them become dirty or allow disorder by having junk and filth accumulate in our drawers and closets. The power of evil abhors cleanliness.

Remove anything in your home that has had something to do with witchcraft, a spiritualist, a curandero, a medium, an oriental religion or cult, or that has been used in a superstitious way. Destroy it or see to it that it is destroyed. Do not keep jewelry that is symbolic of witchcraft or is a sign of the Zodiac. Remove and burn all pornographic pictures and magazines—even those that have been put away in a drawer, closet, or trunk. Get rid of all religious literature that does not agree with the basic truth of our faith that Jesus Christ is divine. He is the Son of God, our only Savior who brings us to the Father. Remove and destroy literature from the Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, Christian Science, Unity, Science of Mind, Scientology, Hare Krishna, Yoga, Transcendental Meditation, Divine Light Mission, Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon, the Children of God, and the Way International. None of this or similar literature should be around our homes. Do not allow the influence of evil to come into your home through television. Carefully monitor the programs that are seen. The values taught by most television advertising are not the values preached by our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapters 5, 6, and 7.

In the Home—Seeking God's Presence

Although you are not a priest, as a baptized Catholic, you have a power that you do not realize. St. Paul, in his letter, told the Ephesians this truth (Eph 1:19): "How very great is his power that works in us is the same as the mighty strength which he used when he raised Christ from death and seated him at his right side in the heavenly world." Think about that for awhile! The power of prayer is greater than what we know of it.

Although we do not have the power of an ordained priest, we can ask God to protect and bless our homes. It is good for us to keep blessed water in our homes and use it frequently. If we wish to ask God's blessing on our own homes, we can say a simple prayer of blessing and then sprinkle holy water in each room. Such a prayer of blessing could be something like the following:

"Heavenly Father, we ask your blessing upon our home. In the name of your Son Jesus, we ask to be delivered from sin and all evil influence. Protect us from sickness, accidents, theft, and all domestic tragedies. We place our home under the Lordship of Jesus and consecrate ourselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. May all who live here receive your blessing of peace and love."

An *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* could also be recited.

The consecration of the family and the home to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is another beautiful Catholic custom. We need to have a crucifix and pictures of the Sacred Heart and our Blessed Lady in our homes. We want our home to be a sacred place.

There needs to be a place in the home where the members of the family come together to pray. In some Mexican families, the custom of having a little altar with pictures or statues, not only of Jesus, Mary, and the saints, but also pictures of members of the family, is observed. It reminds us to pray for them.

Freeing Ourselves from the Power of Evil

Through his passion, death, and resurrection, Jesus has broken the power of the evil one. When the influence of evil is perceived in one's own life, it most frequently comes about from personal sin. Family members suffer because of the sin of an individual member of the family. It is through the sacred power that the Lord has placed in his Church that the evil of sin is conquered.

Through medicine, psychology, and other human means, suffering can often be alleviated. But Jesus, in his Church, has given us basic helps that are often neglected.

In our day the sacrament of Reconciliation has fallen into disuse. There exists a power in this sacrament to break the power of the evil one and sin that is not possible otherwise. Our faith in the Eucharist is weakened. In this sacrament is the power and presence of Jesus himself. Persons who have actually needed exorcism from the power of the evil one have been cured by sitting in a church in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, an hour each day, for one or two months. These were very difficult cases.

Our Blessed Mother has been designated by God as the one who crushes the head of the serpent (cf. Gn 3:1ff). The Rosary is a very powerful means of protection and salvation. Many sons and daughters have been saved from the power of sin and the loss of faith through the perseverance of their parents in saying the Holy Rosary.

The "Evil Eye" or "Hex": A Special Note

Once in a while, people are afraid because they believe that someone has looked upon them with an "evil eye," placed a "hex" upon them or has done something by means of witchcraft to bring them under the destructive power of the enemy. What about this problem?

We must believe, and I strongly believe as well, that Jesus is Lord and God. He is Lord and therefore has dominion over both the Kingdom of Light and the kingdom of darkness. Satan has no dominion over the Kingdom of Light. He is allowed a limited dominion over the kingdom of darkness.

Therefore, if I am baptized and am living in the Kingdom of Light in the state of sanctifying grace, Satan has no dominion over me unless through fear I open the door to his influence. Sanctifying grace means that I am sharing in a mysterious way in the life of God himself and he is dwelling in my soul (cf. Rom 5:5; 2 Cor 6:16; Jn 14:23). However, when I commit a mortal sin, a serious sin, then I lose sanctifying grace and begin to live in the kingdom of darkness. Even though I have been baptized and possibly confirmed, I become somewhat vulnerable. As I persist, unrepentant in serious sin, I become vulnerable to the influence of Satan.

When we are living in the Kingdom of Light, in the state of sanctifying grace, we should simply reject all fear, and place our confidence in God and in our Lady, then live according to the advice previously given in this article as far as the kingdom of darkness is concerned.

Again, however, there is the difficulty of defining sin in our present age. We have to define sin according to the Gospel and the official teaching of our Church as it has been handed down by the Church's Magisterium and not define it from the viewpoint of the modern age which has been contaminated. Many people live in sin and have false peace, because their conscience has been formed, not by the Gospel, but by the spirit of this age. They may be leading very respectable lives, be law-abiding citizens, and in the estimation of people, leading good lives. But if they are not living according to the Ten Commandments, the Gospel, and the moral teaching of the Church, even in just one area that concerns serious sin, they are probably living in the kingdom of darkness.

The sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist (as well as all of the other sacraments) are very special weapons that Jesus gave to his Church to overcome the kingdom of sin and darkness. We need to avail ourselves of these sacraments as Christ meant them to be and have no fear of the enemy. If one has a heavy problem in this regard, I suggest daily Mass and Communion.

Endnotes

1. See http://www.desmoinesregister.com/article/20140222/NEWS
2. See http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-25032305
3. See http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/exorcisms-on-the-rise-occult-activity-sparks-pastoral-emergency-18264/
4. http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Peace/2014/10/28/Pope-Blesses-Work-of-Exorcists
5. Adapted from Heinrich Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961).
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Op cit*., p. 24.
8. Paul Thigpen, PhD, *Manual for Spiritual Warfare* (Charlotte, North Carolina: TAN Books, 2014), pp. 29-30.
9. *Op. cit.,* p. 58.
10. *Ibid*, p. 71.
11. *Ibid*, p. 23.
12. *Ibid*, p. 31.
13. Adam C. Blai, M.S., *Possession, Exorcism, and Hauntings* (San Bernardino, CA, 2015), p. 30.
14. *Ibid*, p. 31.
15. *Ibid.*
16. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20030203_new-age_en.html
17. Baglio, Matt, *The Rite: The Making of a Modern Exorcist* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), p. 60.
18. *Ibid,* p. 61.
19. Adam C. Blai, M.S, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.
20. Fr. Dominic Szymanski, OFM Conv., *Truth about the Devil* (San Bernardino, CA, 2015), p. 7.
21. http://eponymousflower.blogspot.com/2014/01/the-conflict-of-exorcist-today-what.html?m=1
22. http://www.courageouspriest.com/praying-priests-at-abortion-mill-face-demonic-attack
23. See http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/exorcisms-in-indiana-reflect-gods-healing-power

24. See http://www.spiritdaily.com/exorcistandsacraments.htm
25. See http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/exorcism-conference-trains-priests-in-ministry-of-love
26. http://www.montrealgazette.com/story
27. See http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/priests-medics-and-scholars-attend-rome-exorcism-course
28. Msgr. Milivojç, *An Exorcist Speaks: How to Recognize and Protect Oneself Against the Snares of the Evil One* (Canada: Ave Maria Centre of Peace, 2013), p. 49.
29. *Ibid,* p. 76
30. Adapted from Jean Daniélou, *The Angels and Their Mission* (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 2009).
31. See Philip M. Steyne, *Gods of Power: A Study of the Beliefs and the Practices of Animists* (Mandaluyong City: OMF Literature Inc., 2001).
32. For the first part of this chapter dealing with the necessity of obedience, see the article entitled "Private Revelations and Obedience to the Catholic Church" by Glenn Dallaire: http://www.mysticsofthechurch.com/2009/11/-obedience-to-catholic-church-judging.html
33. See http://www.mysticsofthechurch.com/2011/12/sister-magdalena-of-cross-nun-who-made.html
34. Some references on the life of Sister Magdalena de la Cruz: *A History of the Inquisition of Spain* by Henry Charles Lea; *Magdeleine de la Croix-Abbesse Diabolique* by Maurice Garcon; *Witches, devils, and doctors in the Renaissance* by Johann Weyer; *Histoire critique del 'Inquisitiond' Espagne* by Juan Antonio Llorente; *The Diabolic Saint-Magdalena of the Cross* by Lady Marilyn Kay Dennis.
35. See Poulain, Augustin, SJ, *Revelations and Visions: Discerning the True and the Certain from the False or the Doubtful*. Trans. Leonora L. Yorke (New York: Alba House, 1998).
36. Jordan Aumann, *Christian Spirituality in the Catholic Tradition* (*A History of Spirituality*) (Exeter, Devon: A. Wheaton & Co. Ltd.), pp. 246-247.
37. *Ibid*, pp. 168-173.
38. Rev. Pierre Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality in the Middle Ages Vol. 2* (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1953), p. 276.
39. Refer to the previous volume for a detailed discussion regarding preternatural and supernatural healing.
40. See http://catholicparents.org/oxcart/warfare.html. The above statement is made up of excerpts from the pastoral letter.

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